Standard English Classics

LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

MACAULAY

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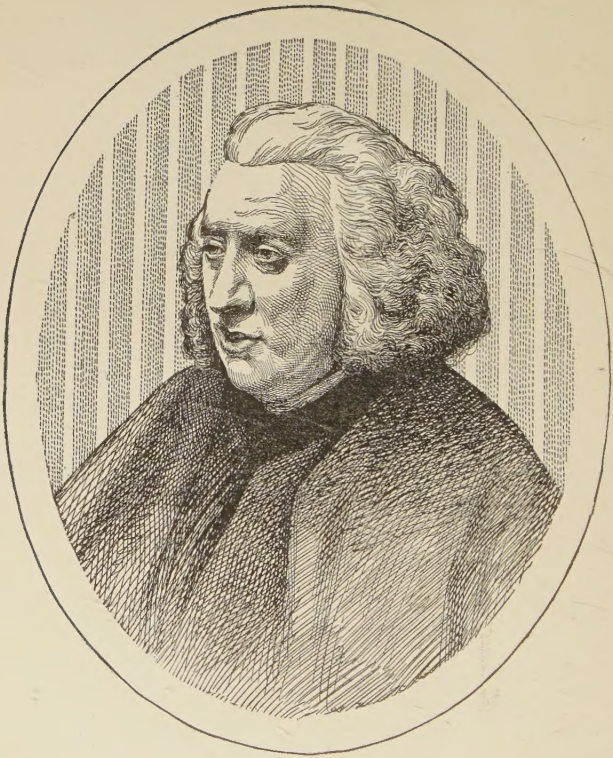

SAMUEL JOHNSON, LL.D.

From a photograph of the painting by John Opie, R.A., in the National Portrait Gallery

MACAULAY'S

LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

WITH A SELECTION FROM HIS ESSAY ON JOHNSON

EDITED
WITH AN INTRODUCTION AND NOTES
BY

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PREFATORY NOTE

The editor explains the difference between Macaulay's *Life of Johnson* and Macaulay's *Essay on Johnson* in the Introduction, IV, p. xxviii, and gives his reason for printing only a portion of the *Essay*.

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INTRODUCTION

I. AN INTRODUCTION TO MACAULAY

(1800–1859)

Before Thomas Babington Macaulay was big enough to hold a large volume he used to lie on the rug by the open fire, with his book on the floor and a piece of bread and butter in his hand. Apparently the three-year-old boy was as fond of reading as of eating, and even at this time he showed that he was no mere bookworm by sharing with the maid what he had learned from "a volume as big as himself." He never tired of telling the stories that he read, and as he easily remembered the words of the book he rapidly acquired a somewhat astonishing vocabulary for a boy of his years. One afternoon when the little fellow, then aged four, was visiting, a servant spilled some hot coffee on his legs. The hostess, who was very sympathetic, soon afterward asked how he was feeling. He looked up in her face and replied, "Thank you, madam, the agony is abated." It was at this same period of his infancy that he had a little plot of ground of his own, marked out by a row of oyster shells, which a maid one day threw away as rubbish. "He went straight to the drawing-room, where his mother was entertaining some visitors, walked into the circle, and said, very solemnly, 'Cursed be Sally; for it is written, Cursed is he that removeth his neighbor's landmark.'"[1]

As these incidents indicate, the youngster was precocious. When he was seven, his mother writes, he wrote a compendium

[1] Trevelyan, *Life and Letters*, I, 41.

of universal history, and "really contrived to give a tolerably connected view of the leading events from the Creation to the present time, filling about a quire of paper." Yet, fond as he was of reading, he was "as playful as a kitten." Although he made wonderful progress in all branches of his education, he had to be driven to school. Again and again his entreaty to be allowed to stay at home met his mother's "No, Tom, if it rains cats and dogs, you shall go." The boy thought he was too busy with his literary activities to waste time in school; but the father and mother looked upon his productions merely as schoolboy amusements. He was to be treated like other boys, and no suspicion was to come to him, if they could help it, that he was superior to other children.

The wise parents had set themselves no easy task in their determination to pay little attention to the unusual gifts of this lad. One afternoon, when a child, he went with his father to make a social call, and found on the table the *Lay of the Last Minstrel*, which he had never before seen. While the others talked he quietly read, and on reaching home recited as many stanzas as his mother had the patience or the strength to hear. Clearly a boy who had read incessantly from the time he was three years old, who committed to memory as rapidly as most boys read, and who was eager to declaim poetry by the hour, or to tell interminable stories of his own, would attract somebody's attention. Fortunately for all concerned the lady who was particularly interested in him, and who had him at her house for weeks at a time, Mrs. Hannah More, encouraged without spoiling him, and rewarded him by buying books to increase his library. When he was six or eight years old, she gave him a small sum with which to lay "a corner-stone" for his library, and a year or two afterward she wrote that he was entitled to another book: "What say you to a little good prose? Johnson's 'Hebrides,' or Walton's 'Lives,' unless you would like a neat edition of 'Cowper's

Poems,' or 'Paradise Lost,' for your own eating?" Whether he began at once to eat Milton's great epic we are not told, but at a later period he said that "if by some miracle of vandalism all copies of 'Paradise Lost' and 'The Pilgrim's Progress' were destroyed off the face of the earth, he would undertake to reproduce them both from recollection." [1]

Prodigy though he was, Thomas was more than a reader and reciter of books. Much as he cared for them he cared more for his home, — that simple, thrifty, comfortable home, — and his three brothers and five sisters. His father, Zachary, did a large business as an African merchant. This earnest, precise, austere man was so anxious for his eldest son to have a thoroughly trained mind that he expected a deliberation and a maturity of judgment that are not natural to an impetuous lad. The good-natured, open-hearted boy reasoned with him and pleaded with him, and whether successful or not in persuading his father, loved him just the same. The mother, with all her love and ambition for him, took the utmost pains to teach him to do thoroughly whatever he undertook, in order that he might attain the perfect development of character that comes alone from the most vigorous training. His sister, Lady Trevelyan, writes: "His unruffled sweetness of temper, his unfailing flow of spirits, his amusing talk, all made his presence so delightful that his wishes and his tastes were our law. He hated strangers and his notion of perfect happiness was to see us all working round him while he read aloud a novel, and then to walk all together on the Common, or, if it rained, to have a frightfully noisy game of hide-and-seek." It was a habit in the family to read aloud every evening from such writers as Shakspere, Clarendon, Miss Edgeworth, Scott, and Crabbe; and, as a standing dish, the *Quarterly* and the *Edinburgh Review*.

From this home, in which he was wisely loved, Thomas was sent to a private school near Cambridge. Then his troubles

[1] Trevelyan, I, 47.

began. The twelve-year-old boy longed for the one attraction that would tempt him from his books — home life — and months ahead he counted the days which must pass before he could again see the home "which absence renders still dearer." In August, 1813, he urged his mother for permission to go home on his birthday, October 25: "If your approbation of my request depends upon my advancing in study, I will work like a cart-horse. If you should refuse it, you will deprive me of the most pleasing illusion which I ever experienced in my life."[1] But the father shook his head and the boy toiled on with his Greek and Latin. He wrote of learning the Greek grammar by heart, he tried his hand at Latin verses, and he read what he pleased, with a preference for prose fiction and poetry.

When eighteen years old (in October, 1818), Macaulay entered Trinity College, Cambridge. But for mathematics he would have been made happy. He writes to his mother: "Oh for words to express my abomination of that science, if a name sacred to the useful and embellishing arts may be applied to the perception and recollection of certain properties in numbers and figures! . . . 'Discipline' of the mind! Say rather starvation, confinement, torture, annihilation!"[2] There were prizes, but Macaulay was not a prize winner. He was an excellent declaimer and an excellent debater, and undoubtedly might have won more honors had he been willing to work hard on the subjects prescribed, whether he liked them or not. But he was eager to avoid the sciences, and he was not content to be a mere struggler for honors. He was sensible enough to enjoy the companionships the place afforded. He knew something of the value of choosing comrades after his own heart, who were thoroughly genuine and sincere, natural and manly. Even if,

[1] The entire letter is interesting. See Trevelyan, I, 56. The letters of this period are particularly attractive.

[2] *Ibid.* I, 91.

as Mr. Morison says, the result of his college course was that "those faculties which were naturally strong were made stronger, and those which were naturally weak received little or no exercise," he wisely spent much time with a remarkable group of young men, among whom Charles Austin was king. Of Austin, John Stuart Mill says, "The impression he gave was that of boundless strength, together with talents which, combined with such apparent force of will and character, seemed capable of dominating the world." And Trevelyan adds, "He certainly was the only man who ever succeeded in dominating Macaulay." Austin it was who turned Zachary Macaulay's eldest son from a Tory into a Whig. The boy had always been interested in the political discussions held in his father's house, a center of consultation for suburban members of Parliament, and had learned to look at public affairs with no thought of ambition or jealous self-seeking. This sort of training, supplemented by his discussions at college, where he soon became a vigorous politician, developed a patriotic, disinterested man.

In the midst of his inexpressible delight in the freedom the college course gave him to indulge his fondness for literature and to spend his days and nights walking and talking with his mates, he continued to remember his family with affection, and did not neglect to write home. On March 25, 1821, he wrote his mother: "I am sure that it is well worth while being sick to be nursed by a mother. There is nothing which I remember with such pleasure as the time when you nursed me at Aspenden. The other night, when I lay on my sofa very ill and hypochondriac, I was told that you were come! How well I remember with what an ecstasy of joy I saw that face approaching me, in the middle of people that did not care if I died that night, except for the trouble of burying me! The sound of your voice, the touch of your hand, are present to me now, and will be, I trust in God, to my last hour." [1]

[1] Trevelyan, I, 102. The letters from college are well worth reading.

On the first of October, 1824, two years after he had received the degree of Bachelor of Arts, he wrote his father that he was that morning elected Fellow, and that the position would make him almost independent financially for the next seven years.

In 1824, too, he made his first address before a public assembly, — an antislavery address that probably gave Zachary Macaulay the happiest half hour of his life, that called out a "whirlwind of cheers" from the audience, and enthusiastic commendation from the *Edinburgh Review*. The next year Macaulay was asked to write for that famous periodical, then at the height of its political, social, and literary power. He contributed the essay on Milton and "like Lord Byron he awoke one morning and found himself famous." The compliment for which he cared most — "the only commendation of his literary talent which even in the innermost domestic circle he was ever known to repeat" — came from Jeffrey, the editor, when he acknowledged the receipt of the manuscript: "The more I think, the less I can conceive where you picked up that style."

When Macaulay entered college, his father considered himself worth at least a hundred thousand pounds; but soon afterward he lost his money and the eldest son found the other children looking to him for guidance and support. As if it were the most natural thing in the world, he drew freely on his income from the fellowship and his occasional contributions to the *Edinburgh*. He was the sunshine of the home, and apparently only those who knew him there got the best of his brilliancy and wit.

In 1826 he was called to the bar, but he was becoming more and more interested in public affairs and longed to be in Parliament. In 1830 Lord Lansdowne, who had been much impressed by Macaulay's articles on Mill, and by his high moral and private character, gave him the opportunity to represent Calne — "on the eve of the most momentous

conflict," says Trevelyan, "that ever was fought out by speech and vote within the walls of a senate-house."[1] When the Reform Bill was introduced, the opposition laughed contemptuously at the impossibility of disfranchising, wholly or in part, a hundred and ten boroughs for the sake of securing a fair representation of the United Kingdom in the House of Commons. Two days later Macaulay made the first of his Reform speeches, and "when he sat down, the Speaker sent for him, and told him that, in all his prolonged experience, he had never seen the House in such a state of excitement." That not only unsettled the House of Commons but put an end to the question whether he should give his time to law or to politics. During the next three years he devoted himself to Parliament. Entering with his whole soul into the thickest of the fight for reform, he made a speech on the second reading of the Reform Bill which no less a critic than Jeffrey said put him "clearly at the head of the great speakers, if not the debaters, of the House."[2]

Naturally the social advantages of the position appealed to Macaulay. He appreciated the freedom, the good fellowship, the spirit of equality among the members. "For the space of three seasons he dined out almost nightly"; and for a man who at a time when his parliamentary fame was highest, was so reduced that he sold the gold medals he had won at Cambridge, — though "he was never for a moment in debt," — it was sometimes convenient to be a lion. Yet this "sitting up in the House of Commons till three o'clock five days in the week, and getting an indigestion at great dinners the remaining two," would not have been the first choice of a man whose greatest joy "in the midst of all this praise" was to think of the pleasure which his success would give to his father and his sisters.

In June, 1832, the bill which Macaulay had supported so zealously and so eloquently at every stage of the fight, finally

[1] Trevelyan, I, 136. [2] *Ibid.*, 179.

have had to be made by the Legislature."[1] He worked patiently, yet he longed to be back in England, and it was a great relief when in 1838, his work done, his competence saved, he was able to return. He was too late to see his father again, for Zachary Macaulay had died while the son was on the way home.

In the fall he went to Italy with his mind full of associations and traditions. His biographer says that every line of good poetry which the fame or the beauty of this country had inspired "rose almost involuntarily to his lips." On this occasion he gave some of those geographical and topographical touches to the *Lays of Ancient Rome* "which set his spirited stanzas ringing in the ear of a traveller in Rome at every turn." Much as he enjoyed Italy, he soon began to long for his regular work, and the following February found him in London again. In March he was unanimously elected to *the* Club, and he was making the most of his leisure for books when he felt it his duty to enter Parliament for Edinburgh. "Office was never, within my memory, so little attractive," he writes, "and therefore, I fear, I cannot, as a man of spirit, flinch, if it is offered to me." Without any show of reluctance he was made Secretary at War and given a seat in the Cabinet. To this position the man who had begun life "without rank, fortune, or private interest" had risen before his fortieth birthday. On March 14, 1840, he wrote his intimate friend, Mr. Ellis, a good account of his life at that time.[2]

"I have got through my estimates [for army expenses] with flying colors; made a long speech of figures and details without hesitation or mistake of any sort; stood catechising on all sorts of questions; and got six millions of public money in the course of an hour or two. I rather like the sort of work, and I have some aptitude for it. I find business pretty nearly enough to occupy all my time; and if I have a few minutes to myself, I spend them with my sister and niece; so that,

[1] Trevelyan, I, 368. [2] *Ibid.*, II, 68.

except while I am dressing and undressing, I get no reading at all. I do not know but that it is as well for me to live thus for a time. I became too mere a bookworm in India, and on my voyage home. Exercise, they say, assists digestion; and it may be that some months of hard official and Parliamentary work may make my studies more nourishing."

But the Queen's advisers did not have the confidence of the country, there was a change of government, and Macaulay lost his office. How the loss affected him we may gather from a part of his letter to Mr. Napier, at that time the editor of the *Edinburgh Review*.

"I can truly say that I have not, for many years, been so happy as I am at present. . . . I am free. I am independent. I am in Parliament, as honorably seated as man can be. My family is comfortably off. I have leisure for literature, yet I am not reduced to the necessity of writing for money. If I had to choose a lot from all that there are in human life, I am not sure that I should prefer any to that which has fallen to me. I am sincerely and thoroughly contented."[1]

Carlyle says that a biography should answer two questions: (1) what and how produced was the effect of society on the man; and (2) what and how produced was his effect on society.[2] To the careful reader of Trevelyan's *Life* the words just quoted from Macaulay will give a pretty fair notion of what, up to this time, Macaulay had got from society. The other question, what he gave to society, is perhaps best answered in the account of the remaining years of his life. In Parliament, in society, and in literary and political circles throughout the country there was the feeling that he had won the respect and good will of all, and that he was to do something still greater. What this greater thing was to be was the question that confronted Macaulay for the next few years.

[1] Trevelyan, II, 89.

[2] *Carlyle's Essay on Burns*, p. 5, Ginn's edition.

Certainly it was not the publishing of his *Lays*, although one hundred thousand copies of them were sold by the year 1875. Nor was it the collecting and reprinting of his *Essays*, although they have given hundreds of thousands of minds a taste for letters and a desire for knowledge. One could hardly call it the delivery of those vehement and effective parliamentary speeches with which he held his audience spellbound, even if one of them did secure the passing of the Copyright Bill in 1842 in practically its present form. But while attending to these other matters, Macaulay had on his mind an undertaking which was destined to satisfy, as far as he carried it toward completion, the hopes of his most enthusiastic admirers. In 1841 he had written to Napier, "I shall not be satisfied unless I produce something which shall for a few days supersede the last fashionable novel on the tables of young ladies."[1] In order that he might give all his attention to this one project he soon stopped writing for the *Edinburgh Review;* he denied himself no little of the pleasure he had been getting from society; he gave up more parliamentary honors than most others could ever hope to win. At last, in 1848, he published the first volumes of a work that met with a heartier welcome than the English-speaking world had given to any historical work since the coming of Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire.* That these volumes of *The History of England* were the result of a very different kind of effort from that with which Macaulay had dashed off the essays, may be inferred from a sentence of Thackeray's, which Trevelyan says is no exaggeration: "He reads twenty books to write a sentence; he travels a hundred miles to make a line of description."[2] After all critics may say for or against the *History*, it remains to note that Macaulay did what he undertook: he wrote a history that is more readable than most novels.

[1] Trevelyan, II, 96. [2] For Trevelyan's evidence, see II, 191.

In other ways we can trace his "effect on society." He was chosen Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow in 1848. Prince Albert tried, but in vain, to induce him to become Professor of Modern History at Cambridge in 1849. He was asked, but declined — urging the plea that he was not a debater — to join the Cabinet in 1852. The same year the people of Edinburgh, ashamed of their failure to reëlect him five years before, chose him to represent them in Parliament. Meantime he had been well and happy. In his journal for October 25, 1850, he wrote: "My birthday. I am fifty. Well, I have had a happy life. I do not know that anybody, whom I have seen close, has had a happier. Some things I regret; but, on the whole, who is better off? I have not children of my own, it is true; but I have children whom I love as if they were my own, and who, I believe, love me. I wish that the next ten years may be as happy as the last ten. But I rather wish it than hope it."[1]

Macaulay may have surmised that the good health which had been such an important factor in keeping him happy would not last much longer. At any rate his last election to the House of Commons was followed by an illness from which he never fully recovered, but through which, for seven years, "he maintained his industry, his courage, his patience, and his benevolence." Occasionally he treated the House to a "torrent of words," but he understood that he must husband his powers for work on books. To protect himself from a bookseller who advertised an edition of his speeches, he made and published a selection of his own, many of which he had to write from memory. Then he continued his work on the *History*. Some of the time he had to "be resolute and work doggedly," as Johnson said. "He almost gave up letter-writing; he quite gave up society; and at last he had not leisure even for his diary."[2] Yet of this immense labor he said, "It is the business and the pleasure of my life."

[1] Trevelyan, II, 244. [2] *Ibid.*, 321.

As a result of this steady toil the writer secured an enviable influence abroad. He was made a member of several foreign academies, and translations have turned the *History* into a dozen tongues. At home, among the numerous honors, he was presented with the degree of Doctor of Civil Law at Oxford, and made a peer — Baron of Rothley. Naturally before receiving this last honor he had withdrawn from Parliament, and from 1856 to the end of his life he enjoyed a retired home, with a fine garden. He had plenty of time to cash the famous check for twenty thousand pounds which the first edition of the *History* brought him, and to invest and spend it as he pleased. On his fifty-seventh birthday he wrote in his diary, "What is much more important to my happiness than wealth, titles, and even fame, those whom I love are well and happy, and very kind and affectionate to me."

One of the chief sources of his happiness, one to which he was particularly indebted these last days, was his love of reading. He could no longer read fourteen books of the *Odyssey* at a stretch while out for a walk, but in the quiet of his library he enjoyed the companionship of the author he happened to be reading as perhaps few men could. He who could command any society in London failed to find any that he preferred, at breakfast or at dinner, to the company of Boswell; and it seems natural and fitting that he should be found on that last December day, in 1859, "in the library, seated in his easy-chair, and dressed as usual, with his book on the table beside him."

Equally fitting is it that in Poet's Corner, Westminster Abbey, the resting place of Johnson, Garrick, Goldsmith, and Addison, there should lie a stone with this inscription:

THOMAS BABINGTON, LORD MACAULAY,
BORN AT ROTHLEY TEMPLE, LEICESTERSHIRE,
OCTOBER 25TH, 1800.
DIED AT HOLLY LODGE, CAMPDEN HILL,
DECEMBER 28TH, 1859.
"His body is buried in peace,
but his name liveth for evermore."

For he left behind him a great and honorable name, and every action of his life was "as clear and transparent as one of his own sentences." His biography reveals the dutiful son, the affectionate brother, the true friend, the honorable politician, the practical legislator, the eloquent speaker, the brilliant author. It shows unmistakably that greater than all his works was the man.

II. MACAULAY AND HIS LITERARY CONTEMPORARIES

The very year in which the last volumes of Johnson's *Lives of the Poets* were published, 1781, Burns began to do his best work. In 1796 Burns died. In 1798, two years before Macaulay was born, Wordsworth and Coleridge published the first of the *Lyrical Ballads*, which included *The Rime of the Ancient Mariner*. Like Burns, yet in a way entirely his own, Wordsworth was the poet of Nature and of Man, and this little volume was the beginning of much spontaneous poetry which in the following years proved a refreshing change from the polished couplets which had been in fashion. Instead of Pope and Addison and Johnson, in whose time literary men cared more for books than for social reforms, more for manner than for matter, came Scott, Byron, Shelley, Coleridge, Landor, and Southey with their irrepressible originality.

Before Macaulay's day Defoe, Richardson, Fielding, and Smollett had each contributed something to the novel. During his lifetime came practically all of the best work of Miss Austen, Scott, Cooper, Lytton, Disraeli, Hawthorne, the Brontës, Dickens, Thackeray, Mrs. Gaskell, Trollope, and Kingsley. George Eliot's *Adam Bede* appeared the year he died.

Other prominent prose writers were Hallam, Grote, Milman, Froude, Mill, Ruskin, and Carlyle. *In Memoriam* and Mrs. Browning's *Sonnets from the Portuguese* were published in 1850, and Browning's *The Ring and the Book* came out in 1868.

As to Macaulay's relations with his literary contemporaries, it must be understood that he gave practically his whole attention to the times of which he read and wrote, and to the men who made those times interesting. Scientists were making important discoveries day by day, but his concern was not with them, even at a time when Darwin was writing his *Origin of Species*. It was not clear to him that philosophical speculations like Carlyle's might do much to better the condition of humanity. He finished Wordsworth's *Prelude* only to be disgusted with "the old flimsy philosophy about the effect of scenery on the mind" and "the endless wildernesses of dull, flat, prosaic twaddle." Although he read an infinite variety of contemporary literature he said he would not attempt to dissect works of imagination. In 1838, when Napier wished him to review Lockhart's *Life of Scott* for the *Edinburgh Review*, he replied that he enjoyed many of Scott's performances as keenly as anybody, but that many could criticise them far better. He added: "Surely it would be desirable that some person who knew Sir Walter, who had at least seen him and spoken with him, should be charged with this article. Many people are living who had a most intimate acquaintance with him. I know no more of him than I know of Dryden or Addison, and not a tenth part so much as I know of Swift, Cowper, or Johnson."[1] He turned instinctively to the old books, the books that he had read again and again: to Homer, Aristophanes, Horace, Herodotus, Addison, Swift, Fielding. There was at least one writer of fiction in his time to whom he was always loyal. On one occasion when he had been reading Dickens and Pliny and Miss Austen at the same time, he declared that *Northanger Abbey*, although "the work of a girl," was in his opinion "worth all Dickens and Pliny together."

What he did for humanity he did as a practical man of affairs, at home alike in the Cabinet and in popular assemblies.

[1] Trevelyan, II, 15.

While Carlyle in the midst of his gloomy life was toiling heroically to banish shams and to get at the True, the Real, Macaulay, who was reasonably satisfied with the past and the present, and hopeful of the future, was sifting from his vast treasury of information about the past what he believed to be significant in history and important in literature. He had none of the feeling that Ruskin had, that it was his duty to turn reformer, but what he did toward educating his readers he did in the way he most enjoyed.

III. THE STUDY OF MACAULAY

Once for all it must be remembered that Macaulay had no intention of being studied as a text-book, and we must deal with him fairly. First we should read the *Life* through at a sitting without consulting a note, just as we read an article in the *Atlantic Monthly* or the *Encyclopædia Britannica*. We should rush on with the "torrent of words" to the end to see what it is all about, and to get an impression of the article as a whole. As Johnson says: "Let him that is yet unacquainted with the powers of Shakespeare, and who desires to feel the highest pleasure that the drama can give, read every play from the first scene to the last with utter negligence of all his commentators. When his fancy is once on the wing, let it not stoop at correction or explanation. When his attention is strongly engaged let it disdain alike to turn aside to the name of Theobald and of Pope. Let him read on through brightness and obscurity, through integrity and corruption; let him preserve his comprehension of the dialogue and his interest in the fable. And when the pleasures of novelty have ceased let him attempt exactness and read the commentators."

Macaulay attracts attention not only to what he says but also to the way in which he says it. In examining his style it will be a good plan to ask ourselves whether the writer ever

wanders from the subject, or whether every part of the *Life* contributes something to the one subject under discussion. Naturally we find ourselves making topics, such for example as Johnson's Youth, His Father, At Oxford. A list of these topics gives us a bird's-eye view of the whole field and enables us to examine the composition more critically. Has the writer arranged the topics in the natural order? Does he give too much space to the treatment of any one topic? Might any of them be omitted to advantage?

Having examined the larger divisions, we may profitably turn our attention to the parts which constitute these divisions, the paragraphs. First let us see whether he goes easily from one paragraph to the next. For example, is the first sentence of paragraph 2 a good connecting link with what precedes? In looking through the *Life* for these links, we should make up our minds whether they are studied or spontaneous.

Then let us test the unity of the paragraphs. Can each paragraph be summed up in a single sentence? Does a combination of the opening and the closing sentence ever serve the purpose? Does one or the other of these ever answer of itself? Has every sentence some bearing on the main thought, or might some sentences be omitted as well as not?

It will be equally profitable, at this point, to test the coherence of half a dozen paragraphs. Does each sentence lead up naturally to the next? Can the order of sentences be changed to advantage? When the sentences in a paragraph hold together firmly, we should point out the cause; when coherence is lacking, we should try to discover to what its absence is due.

Then comes the question of emphasis. Let us see whether we can find two or three paragraphs in which Macaulay succeeds particularly well in emphasizing the main point. If we find three, let us see whether he accomplishes his purpose in the same way each time.

For those of us who are still willing to learn something from Macaulay's style, it is worth while to study the sentences. Selecting two or three of the most interesting paragraphs, we may make the three tests: (1) Is each sentence a unit? (2) Is the relation of every word to the adjoining words absolutely clear? (3) Does the construction emphasize what is important?

Then there is the vocabulary. Who does not enjoy the feeling that he is enlarging his vocabulary? An easy way of doing it is to read two or three times such a paragraph as the nineteenth, and then, with the book closed, to write as much of it as possible from memory. As it is not merely a large vocabulary that we wish, but a well chosen one, we shall do well to compare our version with Macaulay's and see in how many cases his word is better than ours. Have we, for example, equaled "winning affability," or "London mud," or "inhospitable door"? Is his word more effective than ours because it is more specific, or what is the reason?

Before taking farewell of the *Life of Johnson* there is another use to which we may put the topics. We may use them as tests of our knowledge of the essay. If we can write or talk fully and definitely on each of the more important ones, we are sure to carry much food for thought away with us. The value of a review of this sort is evident from a glance at the following topics: Literary Life in London in Johnson's Time, Johnson's Love Affair, The Dictionary, The Turning Point in Johnson's Life, The Rambler, Rasselas, The Idler, His Shakspere, The Club [His Conversation], Boswell, The Thrales, His Fleet Street Establishment, The Lives of the Poets.

As we read Macaulay we should be particularly careful to think for ourselves. Mr. Gladstone has said: "Wherever and whenever read, he will be read with fascination, with delight, with wonder. And with copious instruction too; but also

with copious reserve, with questioning scrutiny, with liberty to reject, and with much exercise of that liberty." [1]

This means that we must follow him up, find out where he got his information, see whether in his enthusiasm he has exaggerated. Then, even if the critics do assure us that he is not one of the deep thinkers, one of the very great writers, we may go on committing his *Lays* to heart, studying his *Essays*, and admiring those wonderfully faithful pictures in his *History*. More than all else, as the years go by, we are likely to find ourselves indebted to him for arousing interest, for leading us to further reading.

IV. MACAULAY ON JOHNSON

Among the "hasty and imperfect articles" which Macaulay wrote for the *Edinburgh Review* was one on Croker's Edition of Boswell's Life of Johnson. It appeared in 1831 and gave the writer a welcome opportunity to show the inaccuracy and unreliability of Croker, one of his political opponents. Nearly one half of his space he gave to criticising the editor, and that part it seems wise to omit in this edition; for we care more about Boswell and Johnson. Twenty-five years later, in 1856, when Macaulay had ceased to write for reviews, but sent an occasional article to the *Encyclopædia Britannica*, he wrote what is generally called the *Life of Samuel Johnson*. The publisher of the encyclopædia writes that it was entirely to Macaulay's friendly feeling that he was "indebted for those literary gems, which could not have been purchased with money"; that "he made it a stipulation of his contributing that remuneration should not be so much as mentioned." The other articles referred to are those on Atterbury, Bunyan, Goldsmith, and William Pitt. One writer calls them "perfect models of artistic condensation."

[1] *The Quarterly Review*, July, 1876.

It is interesting to compare the later work with the earlier: to see whether there is any evidence of improvement in Macaulay's use of English, and whether he gives us a better notion of Boswell and Johnson.

V. REFERENCE BOOKS

The book to which we naturally turn first to see whether Macaulay knows his subject is Boswell's *Life of Johnson;* not the edition in six volumes by Dr. George B. Hill, scholarly as it is, but some such edition as Mr. Mowbray Morris's, published by the Macmillan Company in one volume. When we read Boswell the first time, to get his conception of his hero, we do not care to loiter on every page for notes, interesting and instructive as they may be after the first rapid reading. This single volume is so cheap that no one need hesitate to buy it; then he may mark it up as much as he pleases and enjoy his own book. The conscientious student need not feel obliged to read every word of every episode, but may feel perfectly free to skip whatever does not appeal to him, perfectly certain that before he has turned ten pages he will stumble on something worth while.

The book which will do more than all others to illuminate the life and character of Macaulay is *The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay*, written by his nephew, G. Otto Trevelyan. Harper & Brothers, the publishers, have bound the two volumes in one which is so inexpensive that every school library may easily afford it. Some critics think this *Life* ranks with Boswell's *Johnson*. It certainly is one of the most readable biographies in the English language. Other useful books are numerous, but among them all Carlyle's essay in reply to Macaulay's *Essay on Boswell's Life of Johnson* stands out first.

Boswell

Arblay, Madame d'. Memoirs of Dr. Burney. (Contains "the most vivid account of Boswell's manner when in company with Dr. Johnson.")

Boswelliana: the Commonplace Book of James Boswell. London, 1874.

Carlyle, Thomas. Boswell's Life of Johnson.

Fitzgerald, Percy, M.A., F.S.A. Life of James Boswell with four portraits. 2 vols. London: 1891.

Leask, W. Keith. James Boswell. (Famous Scots Series.) Edinburgh: 1897.

Stephen, Leslie. James Boswell (in the Dictionary of National Biography).

Johnson

Birrell, A. Dr. Johnson (in Obiter Dicta, Second Series).

Boswell, James. Life of Johnson including Boswell's Journal of a Tour to the Hebrides, etc., edited by George Birkbeck Hill, D.C.L., Pembroke College, Oxford, in six volumes. Oxford, 1897. ("Boswell's famous book has never before been annotated with equal enthusiasm, learning, and industry." — Austin Dobson.)

The Life of Samuel Johnson, LL.D., including a Journal of his Tour to the Hebrides, by James Boswell, Esq. New edition, with numerous additions and notes, by The Right Hon. John Wilson Croker, M.P., to which are added . . . 50 engraved illustrations. In ten volumes. London: 1839.

The Life of Johnson edited by Alexander Napier, M.A., London, 1884, also has several engravings.

Dr. Henry Morley's edition of Boswell's work is illustrated with portraits by Sir Joshua Reynolds. George Routledge & Sons, London, 1885.

Brougham, Henry, Lord, F.R.S. Lives of Men of Letters of the Time of George III. London: 1856.

Gardiner, S. R. A Student's History of England.

Gosse, Edmund W. History of Eighteenth Century Literature.

GREEN, J. R. A Short History of the English People.

HILL, GEORGE BIRKBECK, D.C.L. Dr. Johnson, His Friends and His Critics. London: 1878.

HOSTE, J. W. Johnson and His Circle. London: Jarrold & Sons.

Johnson's Chief Lives of the Poets, Being those of Milton, Dryden, Swift, Addison, Pope, Gray, and Macaulay's Life of Johnson, with a Preface by Matthew Arnold, to which are appended Macaulay's and Carlyle's Essays on Boswell's Life of Johnson. Henry Holt & Company, New York, 1879.

Johnson Club Papers by Various Hands. London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1899.

Johnsoniana: Anecdotes of the late Samuel Johnson, LL.D., by Mrs. Piozzi, Bishop Percy, and others, together with the Diary of Dr. Campbell and extracts from that of Madame D' Arblay, newly collected and edited by Robina Napier. (Engravings and various autographs.) George Bell and Sons, London, 1884.

JOHNSON, SAMUEL. The Idler. In the series of British Essayists.

Lives of the Poets. A New Edition, with Notes and Introduction by Arthur Waugh, in six volumes. Scribner's Sons, 1896.

London. In Hales's Longer English Poems.

The Rambler. In the series of British Essayists.

Rasselas. Leach, Shewell & Sanborn, or Henry Holt & Co.

The Vanity of Human Wishes. In Hales's Longer English Poems and Syle's From Milton to Tennyson.

The Works of Samuel Johnson. In nine volumes. Oxford.

LECKY, W. E. H. History of England in the Eighteenth Century.

PIOZZI, MRS. Anecdotes of the Late Samuel Johnson during the Last Twenty Years of his Life. 1786.

Same, in the cheap National Series. The Cassell Company.

Letters to and from the Late Samuel Johnson, LL.D. 1788.

STEPHEN, LESLIE. History of English Thought in the Eighteenth Century.

Dr. Johnson's Writings (in Hours in a Library, Vol. II).

Samuel Johnson. Dictionary of National Biography.

Samuel Johnson. English Men of Letters Series. Harper & Brothers. (Cloth or paper.)

MACAULAY

BAGEHOT, WALTER. Thomas Babington Macaulay. (In Literary Studies.)

BREWER, E. COBHAM, LL.D. Dictionary of Phrase and Fable. The Historic Note-book.

CLARK, J. SCOTT. Thomas Babington Macaulay. (In A Study of English Prose Writers.)

GLADSTONE, W. E. Gleanings of Past Years.

HARRISON, FREDERIC. Lord Macaulay. (In Early Victorian Literature.)

MACAULAY, THOMAS B. Critical and Historical Essays, contributed to the *Edinburgh Review*. Trevelyan edition, in two volumes. Longmans, Green, and Co.

The History of England from the Accession of James II.

Works. Complete edition, by Lady Trevelyan, in eight volumes. Longmans, Green, and Co.

MINTO, WILLIAM. Manual of English Prose Literature.

MORISON, J. COTTER. Macaulay. (In English Men of Letters, edited by John Morley.)

PATTISON, MARK. Macaulay. (In the Encyclopædia Britannica.)

STEPHEN, LESLIE. Macaulay. (In the Dictionary of National Biography; in Hours in a Library.)

TREVELYAN, G. OTTO. The Life and Letters of Lord Macaulay, in two volumes; also two volumes in one.

LONDON

BESANT, WALTER. London in the Eighteenth Century.

HARE, AUGUSTUS JOHN. Walks in London.

HUTTON, LAURENCE. Literary Landmarks of London.

WHEATLEY, HENRY B. London, Past and Present.

VI. CHRONOLOGY OF MACAULAY'S LIFE AND WORKS

1800. Born.

1814. Sent to boarding school.

1818. Entered Trinity College, Cambridge.

1822. Graduated as B.A.

1824. Degree of M.A. Elected Fellow. First public speech.
1825. First contribution to the *Edinburgh Review:* essay on Milton.
1826. Called to the bar.
1828. Commissioner of Bankruptcy.
1830. Member of Parliament for Calne. First speech in Parliament.
1831. Speeches on the Reform Bill. Essay on Boswell's Life of Johnson.
1833. Member of Parliament for Leeds. Essay on Horace Walpole.
1834. Essay on William Pitt, Earl of Chatham. Sailed for India as legal adviser to the Supreme Council.
1837. Penal Code finished.
1838. His father died. Returned to England. Visited Italy.
1839. Elected to the Club. Member of Parliament for Edinburgh. Secretary at War.
1840. Essay on Lord Clive.
1841. Reëlected to Parliament for Edinburgh. Essay on Warren Hastings.
1842. Lays of Ancient Rome published.
1843. Essay on Madame d'Arblay. Essay on the Life and Writings of Addison.
1844. Essay on the Earl of Chatham. (The second essay on this subject, and his last contribution to the *Edinburgh Review.*)
1846. Paymaster-General of the Army. Defeated in Edinburgh election.
1848. First two volumes of his History of England.
1849. Lord Rector of the University of Glasgow.
1852. Again elected to Parliament from Edinburgh, although not a candidate. Failing health.
1854. Life of John Bunyan.
1855. Third and fourth volumes of his History of England. (The fifth volume appeared after his death.)
1856. Resigned his seat in Parliament. Life of Samuel Johnson. Life of Oliver Goldsmith.
1857. Became Baron Macaulay of Rothley.
1859. Life of William Pitt. Died December 28.

VII. CHRONOLOGY OF JOHNSON'S LIFE AND WORKS

1709. Born September 18.
1728. Entered Pembroke College, Oxford. Turned Pope's Messiah into Latin verse.
1731. Left Oxford. His father died.
1735. Married. Opened an academy at Edial.
1737. Went to London.
1738. His first important work: London. Began to write for *The Gentleman's Magazine.*
1744. Life of Savage.
1747. Prospectus of the Dictionary.
1749. The Vanity of Human Wishes. Irene.
1750–1752. The Rambler.
1752. Death of his wife.
1755. Letter to Chesterfield. The Dictionary appeared.
1758–1760. The Idler.
1759. Death of his mother. Rasselas.
1762. Pensioned.
1763. Met Boswell for the first time.
1764. The Club founded.
1765. Made Doctor of Laws by Trinity College, Dublin. Introduced to the Thrales. His edition of Shakspere published.
1773. Spent three months in Scotland.
1775. Journey to the Western Islands of Scotland published. Taxation no Tyranny. Received the degree of Doctor in Civil Law from Oxford.
1779. First four volumes of his Lives of the Poets.
1781. The remaining six volumes of the Lives.
1784. Died December 13.

LIFE OF SAMUEL JOHNSON

(*December, 1856*)

1. Samuel Johnson, one of the most eminent English writers of the eighteenth century, was the son of Michael Johnson, who was, at the beginning of that century, a magistrate of Lichfield, and a bookseller of great note in the midland counties. Michael's abilities and attainments seem to have been considerable. He was so well acquainted with the contents of the volumes which he exposed to sale, that the country rectors of Staffordshire and Worcestershire thought him an oracle on points of learning. Between him and the clergy, indeed, there was a strong religious and political sympathy. He was a zealous churchman, and, though he had qualified himself for municipal office by taking the oaths to the sovereigns in possession, was to the last a Jacobite in heart. At his house, a house which is still pointed out to every traveller who visits Lichfield, Samuel was born on the 18th of September 1709. In the child, the physical, intellectual, and moral peculiarities which afterwards distinguished the man were plainly discernible; great muscular strength accompanied by much awkwardness and many infirmities; great quickness of parts, with a morbid propensity to sloth and procrastination; a kind and generous heart, with a gloomy and irritable temper. He had inherited from his ancestors a scrofulous taint, which it was beyond the power of medicine to remove. His parents were weak enough to believe that the royal touch was a specific

for this malady. In his third year he was taken up to London, inspected by the court surgeon, prayed over by the court chaplains, and stroked and presented with a piece of gold by Queen Anne. One of his earliest recollections was that of a stately lady in a diamond stomacher and a long black hood. Her hand was applied in vain. The boy's features, which were originally noble and not irregular, were distorted by his malady. His cheeks were deeply scarred. He lost for a time the sight of one eye; and he saw but very imperfectly with the other. But the force of his mind overcame every impediment. Indolent as he was, he acquired knowledge with such ease and rapidity that at every school to which he was sent he was soon the best scholar. From sixteen to eighteen he resided at home, and was left to his own devices. He learned much at this time, though his studies were without guidance and without plan. He ransacked his father's shelves, dipped into a multitude of books, read what was interesting, and passed over what was dull. An ordinary lad would have acquired little or no useful knowledge in such a way: but much that was dull to ordinary lads was interesting to Samuel. He read little Greek; for his proficiency in that language was not such that he could take much pleasure in the masters of Attic poetry and eloquence. But he had left school a good Latinist; and he soon acquired, in the large and miscellaneous library of which he now had the command, an extensive knowledge of Latin literature. That Augustan delicacy of taste which is the boast of the great public schools of England he never possessed. But he was early familiar with some classical writers who were quite unknown to the best scholars in the sixth form at Eton. He was peculiarly attracted by the works of the great restorers of learning. Once, while searching for some apples, he found a huge folio volume of Petrarch's works. The name excited his curiosity; and he eagerly devoured hundreds of pages. Indeed, the diction and versification of his own Latin compositions show

that he had paid at least as much attention to modern copies from the antique as to the original models.

2. While he was thus irregularly educating himself, his family was sinking into hopeless poverty. Old Michael Johnson was much better qualified to pore upon books, and to talk about them, than to trade in them. His business declined; his debts increased; it was with difficulty that the daily expenses of his household were defrayed. It was out of his power to support his son at either university; but a wealthy neighbour offered assistance; and, in reliance on promises which proved to be of very little value, Samuel was entered at Pembroke College, Oxford. When the young scholar presented himself to the rulers of that society, they were amazed not more by his ungainly figure and eccentric manners than by the quantity of extensive and curious information which he had picked up during many months of desultory but not unprofitable study. On the first day of his residence he surprised his teachers by quoting Macrobius; and one of the most learned among them declared that he had never known a freshman of equal attainments.

3. At Oxford, Johnson resided during about three years. He was poor, even to raggedness; and his appearance excited a mirth and a pity which were equally intolerable to his haughty spirit. He was driven from the quadrangle of Christ Church by the sneering looks which the members of that aristocratical society cast at the holes in his shoes. Some charitable person placed a new pair at his door; but he spurned them away in a fury. Distress made him, not servile, but reckless and ungovernable. No opulent gentleman commoner, panting for one-and-twenty, could have treated the academical authorities with more gross disrespect. The needy scholar was generally to be seen under the gate of Pembroke, a gate now adorned with his effigy, haranguing a circle of lads, over whom, in spite of his tattered gown and dirty linen, his wit and audacity gave him an undisputed ascendency. In every mutiny against the

discipline of the college he was the ringleader. Much was pardoned, however, to a youth so highly distinguished by abilities and acquirements. He had early made himself known by turning Pope's Messiah into Latin verse. The style and rhythm, indeed, were not exactly Virgilian; but the translation found many admirers, and was read with pleasure by Pope himself.

4. The time drew near at which Johnson would, in the ordinary course of things, have become a Bachelor of Arts: but he was at the end of his resources. Those promises of support on which he had relied had not been kept. His family could do nothing for him. His debts to Oxford tradesmen were small indeed, yet larger than he could pay. In the autumn of 1731, he was under the necessity of quitting the university without a degree. In the following winter his father died. The old man left but a pittance; and of that pittance almost the whole was appropriated to the support of his widow. The property to which Samuel succeeded amounted to no more than twenty pounds.

5. His life, during the thirty years which followed, was one hard struggle with poverty. The misery of that struggle needed no aggravation, but was aggravated by the sufferings of an unsound body and an unsound mind. Before the young man left the university, his hereditary malady had broken forth in a singularly cruel form. He had become an incurable hypochondriac. He said long after that he had been mad all his life, or at least not perfectly sane; and, in truth, eccentricities less strange than his have often been thought grounds sufficient for absolving felons, and for setting aside wills. His grimaces, his gestures, his mutterings, sometimes diverted and sometimes terrified people who did not know him. At a dinner table he would, in a fit of absence, stoop down and twitch off a lady's shoe. He would amaze a drawing-room by suddenly ejaculating a clause of the Lord's Prayer. He would conceive

an unintelligible aversion to a particular alley, and perform a great circuit rather than see the hateful place. He would set his heart on touching every post in the streets through which he walked. If by any chance he missed a post, he would go back a hundred yards and repair the omission. Under the influence of his disease, his senses became morbidly torpid, and his imagination morbidly active. At one time he would stand poring on the town clock without being able to tell the hour. At another, he would distinctly hear his mother, who was many miles off, calling him by his name. But this was not the worst. A deep melancholy took possession of him, and gave a dark tinge to all his views of human nature and of human destiny. Such wretchedness as he endured has driven many men to shoot themselves or drown themselves. But he was under no temptation to commit suicide. He was sick of life; but he was afraid of death; and he shuddered at every sight or sound which reminded him of the inevitable hour. In religion he found but little comfort during his long and frequent fits of dejection; for his religion partook of his own character. The light from heaven shone on him indeed, but not in a direct line, or with its own pure splendour. The rays had to struggle through a disturbing medium; they reached him refracted, dulled and discoloured by the thick gloom which had settled on his soul; and, though they might be sufficiently clear to guide him, were too dim to cheer him.

6. With such infirmities of body and mind, this celebrated man was left, at two-and-twenty, to fight his way through the world. He remained during about five years in the midland counties. At Lichfield, his birthplace and his early home, he had inherited some friends and acquired others. He was kindly noticed by Henry Hervey, a gay officer of noble family, who happened to be quartered there. Gilbert Walmesley, registrar of the ecclesiastical court of the diocese, a man of distinguished parts, learning, and knowledge of the world, did

himself honour by patronising the young adventurer, whose repulsive person, unpolished manners, and squalid garb moved many of the petty aristocracy of the neighbourhood to laughter or to disgust. At Lichfield, however, Johnson could find no way of earning a livelihood. He became usher of a grammar school in Leicestershire; he resided as a humble companion in the house of a country gentleman; but a life of dependence was insupportable to his haughty spirit. He repaired to Birmingham, and there earned a few guineas by literary drudgery. In that town he printed a translation, little noticed at the time, and long forgotten, of a Latin book about Abyssinia. He then put forth proposals for publishing by subscription the poems of Politian, with notes containing a history of modern Latin verse: but subscriptions did not come in; and the volume never appeared.

7. While leading this vagrant and miserable life, Johnson fell in love. The object of his passion was Mrs. Elizabeth Porter, a widow who had children as old as himself. To ordinary spectators, the lady appeared to be a short, fat, coarse woman, painted half an inch thick, dressed in gaudy colours, and fond of exhibiting provincial airs and graces which were not exactly those of the Queensberrys and Lepels. To Johnson, however, whose passions were strong, whose eyesight was too weak to distinguish ceruse from natural bloom, and who had seldom or never been in the same room with a woman of real fashion, his Titty, as he called her, was the most beautiful, graceful, and accomplished of her sex. That his admiration was unfeigned cannot be doubted; for she was as poor as himself. She accepted, with a readiness which did her little honour, the addresses of a suitor who might have been her son. The marriage, however, in spite of occasional wranglings, proved happier than might have been expected. The lover continued to be under the illusions of the wedding-day till the lady died in her sixty-fourth year. On her monument he

placed an inscription extolling the charms of her person and of her manners; and when, long after her decease, he had occasion to mention her, he exclaimed, with a tenderness half ludicrous, half pathetic, "Pretty creature!"

8. His marriage made it necessary for him to exert himself more strenuously than he had hitherto done. He took a house in the neighbourhood of his native town, and advertised for pupils. But eighteen months passed away; and only three pupils came to his academy. Indeed, his appearance was so strange, and his temper so violent, that his schoolroom must have resembled an ogre's den. Nor was the tawdry painted grandmother whom he called his Titty well qualified to make provision for the comfort of young gentlemen. David Garrick, who was one of the pupils, used, many years later, to throw the best company of London into convulsions of laughter by mimicking the endearments of this extraordinary pair.

9. At length Johnson, in the twenty-eighth year of his age, determined to seek his fortune in the capital as a literary adventurer. He set out with a few guineas, three acts of the tragedy of Irene in manuscript, and two or three letters of introduction from his friend Walmesley.

10. Never, since literature became a calling in England, had it been a less gainful calling than at the time when Johnson took up his residence in London. In the preceding generation a writer of eminent merit was sure to be munificently rewarded by the government. The least that he could expect was a pension or a sinecure place; and, if he showed any aptitude for politics, he might hope to be a member of parliament, a lord of the treasury, an ambassador, a secretary of state. It would be easy, on the other hand, to name several writers of the nineteenth century of whom the least successful has received forty thousand pounds from the booksellers. But Johnson entered on his vocation in the most dreary part of the dreary interval which separated two ages of prosperity.

Literature had ceased to flourish under the patronage of the great, and had not begun to flourish under the patronage of the public. One man of letters, indeed, Pope, had acquired by his pen what was then considered as a handsome fortune, and lived on a footing of equality with nobles and ministers of state. But this was a solitary exception. Even an author whose reputation was established, and whose works were popular, such an author as Thomson, whose Seasons were in every library, such an author as Fielding, whose Pasquin had had a greater run than any drama since The Beggar's Opera, was sometimes glad to obtain, by pawning his best coat, the means of dining on tripe at a cookshop underground, where he could wipe his hands, after his greasy meal, on the back of a Newfoundland dog. It is easy, therefore, to imagine what humiliations and privations must have awaited the novice who had still to earn a name. One of the publishers to whom Johnson applied for employment measured with a scornful eye that athletic though uncouth frame, and exclaimed, "You had better get a porter's knot, and carry trunks." Nor was the advice bad; for a porter was likely to be as plentifully fed, and as comfortably lodged, as a poet.

11. Some time appears to have elapsed before Johnson was able to form any literary connection from which he could expect more than bread for the day which was passing over him. He never forgot the generosity with which Hervey, who was now residing in London, relieved his wants during this time of trial. "Harry Hervey," said the old philosopher many years later, "was a vicious man; but he was very kind to me. If you call a dog Hervey I shall love him." At Hervey's table Johnson sometimes enjoyed feasts which were made more agreeable by contrast. But in general he dined, and thought that he dined well, on sixpenny worth of meat, and a pennyworth of bread, at an alehouse near Drury Lane.

12. The effect of the privations and sufferings which he endured at this time was discernible to the last in his temper and his deportment. His manners had never been courtly. They now became almost savage. Being frequently under the necessity of wearing shabby coats and dirty shirts, he became a confirmed sloven. Being often very hungry when he sat down to his meals, he contracted a habit of eating with ravenous greediness. Even to the end of his life, and even at the tables of the great, the sight of food affected him as it affects wild beasts and birds of prey. His taste in cookery, formed in subterranean ordinaries and alamode beefshops, was far from delicate. Whenever he was so fortunate as to have near him a hare that had been kept too long, or a meat pie made with rancid butter, he gorged himself with such violence that his veins swelled, and the moisture broke out on his forehead. The affronts which his poverty emboldened stupid and low-minded men to offer to him would have broken a mean spirit into sycophancy, but made him rude even to ferocity. Unhappily the insolence which, while it was defensive, was pardonable, and in some sense respectable, accompanied him into societies where he was treated with courtesy and kindness. He was repeatedly provoked into striking those who had taken liberties with him. All the sufferers, however, were wise enough to abstain from talking about their beatings, except Osborne, the most rapacious and brutal of booksellers, who proclaimed everywhere that he had been knocked down by the huge fellow whom he had hired to puff the Harleian Library.

13. About a year after Johnson had begun to reside in London, he was fortunate enough to obtain regular employment from Cave, an enterprising and intelligent bookseller, who was proprietor and editor of *The Gentleman's Magazine*. That journal, just entering on the ninth year of its long existence, was the only periodical work in the kingdom which then had what would now be called a large circulation. It was, indeed,

the chief source of parliamentary intelligence. It was not then safe, even during a recess, to publish an account of the proceedings of either House without some disguise. Cave, however, ventured to entertain his readers with what he called "Reports of the Debates of the Senate of Lilliput." France was Blefuscu; London was Mildendo: pounds were sprugs: the Duke of Newcastle was the Nardac Secretary of State: Lord Hardwicke was the Hurgo Hickrad: and William Pulteney was Wingul Pulnub. To write the speeches was, during several years, the business of Johnson. He was generally furnished with notes, meagre indeed, and inaccurate, of what had been said; but sometimes he had to find arguments and eloquence both for the ministry and for the opposition. He was himself a Tory, not from rational conviction — for his serious opinion was that one form of government was just as good or as bad as another — but from mere passion, such as inflamed the Capulets against the Montagues, or the Blues of the Roman circus against the Greens. In his infancy he had heard so much talk about the villanies of the Whigs, and the dangers of the Church, that he had become a furious partisan when he could scarcely speak. Before he was three he had insisted on being taken to hear Sacheverell preach at Lichfield Cathedral, and had listened to the sermon with as much respect, and probably with as much intelligence, as any Staffordshire squire in the congregation. The work which had been begun in the nursery had been completed by the university. Oxford, when Johnson resided there, was the most Jacobitical place in England; and Pembroke was one of the most Jacobitical colleges in Oxford. The prejudices which he brought up to London were scarcely less absurd than those of his own Tom Tempest. Charles II. and James II. were two of the best kings that ever reigned. Laud, a poor creature who never did, said, or wrote anything indicating more than the ordinary capacity of an old woman, was a prodigy of parts and

learning over whose tomb Art and Genius still continued to weep. Hampden deserved no more honourable name than that of "the zealot of rebellion." Even the ship money, condemned not less decidedly by Falkland and Clarendon than by the bitterest Roundheads, Johnson would not pronounce to have been an unconstitutional impost. Under a government, the mildest that had ever been known in the world — under a government, which allowed to the people an unprecedented liberty of speech and action — he fancied that he was a slave; he assailed the ministry with obloquy which refuted itself, and regretted the lost freedom and happiness of those golden days in which a writer who had taken but one-tenth part of the license allowed to him would have been pilloried, mangled with the shears, whipped at the cart's tail, and flung into a noisome dungeon to die. He hated dissenters and stock-jobbers, the excise and the army, septennial parliaments, and continental connections. He long had an aversion to the Scotch, an aversion of which he could not remember the commencement, but which, he owned, had probably originated in his abhorrence of the conduct of the nation during the Great Rebellion. It is easy to guess in what manner debates on great party questions were likely to be reported by a man whose judgment was so much disordered by party spirit. A show of fairness was indeed necessary to the prosperity of the Magazine. But Johnson long afterwards owned that, though he had saved appearances, he had taken care that the Whig dogs should not have the best of it; and, in fact, every passage which has lived, every passage which bears the marks of his higher faculties, is put into the mouth of some member of the opposition.

14. A few weeks after Johnson had entered on these obscure labours, he published a work which at once placed him high among the writers of his age. It is probable that what he had suffered during his first year in London had often

reminded him of some parts of that noble poem in which Juvenal had described the misery and degradation of a needy man of letters, lodged among the pigeons' nests in the tottering garrets which overhung the streets of Rome. Pope's admirable imitations of Horace's Satires and Epistles had recently appeared, were in every hand, and were by many readers thought superior to the originals. What Pope had done for Horace, Johnson aspired to do for Juvenal. The enterprise was bold, and yet judicious. For between Johnson and Juvenal there was much in common, much more certainly than between Pope and Horace.

15. Johnson's London appeared without his name in May 1738. He received only ten guineas for this stately and vigorous poem: but the sale was rapid, and the success complete. A second edition was required within a week. Those small critics who are always desirous to lower established reputations ran about proclaiming that the anonymous satirist was superior to Pope in Pope's own peculiar department of literature. It ought to be remembered, to the honour of Pope, that he joined heartily in the applause with which the appearance of a rival genius was welcomed. He made inquiries about the author of London. Such a man, he said, could not long be concealed. The name was soon discovered; and Pope, with great kindness, exerted himself to obtain an academical degree and the mastership of a grammar school for the poor young poet. The attempt failed, and Johnson remained a bookseller's hack.

16. It does not appear that these two men, the most eminent writer of the generation which was going out, and the most eminent writer of the generation which was coming in, ever saw each other. They lived in very different circles, one surrounded by dukes and earls, the other by starving pamphleteers and indexmakers. Among Johnson's associates at this time may be mentioned Boyse, who, when his shirts

were pledged, scrawled Latin verses sitting up in bed with his arms through two holes in his blanket, who composed very respectable sacred poetry when he was sober, and who was at last run over by a hackney coach when he was drunk; Hoole, surnamed the metaphysical tailor, who, instead of attending to his measures, used to trace geometrical diagrams on the board where he sate cross-legged; and the penitent impostor, George Psalmanazar, who, after poring all day, in a humble lodging, on the folios of Jewish rabbis and Christian fathers, indulged himself at night with literary and theological conversation at an alehouse in the city. But the most remarkable of the persons with whom at this time Johnson consorted was Richard Savage, an earl's son, a shoemaker's apprentice, who had seen life in all its forms, who had feasted among blue ribands in Saint James's Square, and had lain with fifty pounds' weight of iron on his legs in the condemned ward of Newgate. This man had, after many vicissitudes of fortune, sunk at last into abject and hopeless poverty. His pen had failed him. His patrons had been taken away by death, or estranged by the riotous profusion with which he squandered their bounty, and the ungrateful insolence with which he rejected their advice. He now lived by begging. He dined on venison and champagne whenever he had been so fortunate as to borrow a guinea. If his questing had been unsuccessful, he appeased the rage of hunger with some scraps of broken meat, and lay down to rest under the Piazza of Covent Garden in warm weather, and, in cold weather, as near as he could get to the furnace of a glass house. Yet, in his misery, he was still an agreeable companion. He had an inexhaustible store of anecdotes about that gay and brilliant world from which he was now an outcast. He had observed the great men of both parties in hours of careless relaxation, had seen the leaders of opposition without the mask of patriotism, and had heard the prime minister roar with laughter and tell stories not over

decent. During some months Savage lived in the closest familiarity with Johnson; and then the friends parted, not without tears. Johnson remained in London to drudge for Cave. Savage went to the West of England, lived there as he had lived everywhere, and, in 1743, died, penniless and heart-broken, in Bristol gaol.

17. Soon after his death, while the public curiosity was strongly excited about his extraordinary character, and his not less extraordinary adventures, a life of him appeared widely different from the catchpenny lives of eminent men which were then a staple article of manufacture in Grub Street. The style was indeed deficient in ease and variety; and the writer was evidently too partial to the Latin element of our language. But the little work, with all its faults, was a masterpiece. No finer specimen of literary biography existed in any language, living or dead; and a discerning critic might have confidently predicted that the author was destined to be the founder of a new school of English eloquence.

18. The life of Savage was anonymous; but it was well known in literary circles that Johnson was the writer. During the three years which followed, he produced no important work; but he was not, and indeed could not be, idle. The fame of his abilities and learning continued to grow. Warburton pronounced him a man of parts and genius; and the praise of Warburton was then no light thing. Such was Johnson's reputation that, in 1747, several eminent booksellers combined to employ him in the arduous work of preparing a Dictionary of the English language, in two folio volumes. The sum which they agreed to pay him was only fifteen hundred guineas; and out of this sum he had to pay several poor men of letters who assisted him in the humbler parts of his task.

19. The prospectus of the Dictionary he addressed to the Earl of Chesterfield. Chesterfield had long been celebrated for the politeness of his manners, the brilliancy of his wit,

and the delicacy of his taste. He was acknowledged to be the finest speaker in the House of Lords. He had recently governed Ireland, at a momentous conjuncture, with eminent firmness, wisdom, and humanity; and he had since become Secretary of State. He received Johnson's homage with the most winning affability, and requited it with a few guineas, bestowed doubtless in a very graceful manner, but was by no means desirous to see all his carpets blackened with the London mud, and his soups and wines thrown to right and left over the gowns of fine ladies and the waistcoats of fine gentlemen, by an absent, awkward scholar, who gave strange starts and uttered strange growls, who dressed like a scarecrow, and ate like a cormorant. During some time Johnson continued to call on his patron, but after being repeatedly told by the porter that his lordship was not at home, took the hint, and ceased to present himself at the inhospitable door.

20. Johnson had flattered himself that he should have completed his Dictionary by the end of 1750; but it was not till 1755 that he at length gave his huge volumes to the world. During the seven years which he passed in the drudgery of penning definitions and marking quotations for transcription, he sought for relaxation in literary labour of a more agreeable kind. In 1749 he published the Vanity of Human Wishes, an excellent imitation of the Tenth Satire of Juvenal. It is in truth not easy to say whether the palm belongs to the ancient or to the modern poet. The couplets in which the fall of Wolsey is described, though lofty and sonorous, are feeble when compared with the wonderful lines which bring before us all Rome in tumult on the day of the fall of Sejanus, the laurels on the doorposts, the white bull stalking towards the Capitol, the statues rolling down from their pedestals, the flatterers of the disgraced minister running to see him dragged with a hook through the streets, and to have a kick at his carcase before it is hurled into the Tiber. It must be owned too that in the

concluding passage the Christian moralist has not made the most of his advantages, and has fallen decidedly short of the sublimity of his pagan model. On the other hand, Juvenal's Hannibal must yield to Johnson's Charles; and Johnson's vigorous and pathetic enumeration of the miseries of a literary life must be allowed to be superior to Juvenal's lamentation over the fate of Demosthenes and Cicero.

21. For the copyright of the Vanity of Human Wishes Johnson received only fifteen guineas.

22. A few days after the publication of this poem, his tragedy, begun many years before, was brought on the stage. His pupil, David Garrick, had, in 1741, made his appearance on a humble stage in Goodman's Fields, had at once risen to the first place among actors, and was now, after several years of almost uninterrupted success, manager of Drury Lane Theatre. The relation between him and his old preceptor was of a very singular kind. They repelled each other strongly, and yet attracted each other strongly. Nature had made them of very different clay; and circumstances had fully brought out the natural peculiarities of both. Sudden prosperity had turned Garrick's head. Continued adversity had soured Johnson's temper. Johnson saw with more envy than became so great a man the villa, the plate, the china, the Brussels carpet, which the little mimic had got by repeating, with grimaces and gesticulations, what wiser men had written; and the exquisitely sensitive vanity of Garrick was galled by the thought that, while all the rest of the world was applauding him, he could obtain from one morose cynic, whose opinion it was impossible to despise, scarcely any compliment not acidulated with scorn. Yet the two Lichfield men had so many early recollections in common, and sympathised with each other on so many points on which they sympathised with nobody else in the vast population of the capital, that, though the master was often provoked by the monkey-like impertinence of the pupil, and the

pupil by the bearish rudeness of the master, they remained friends till they were parted by death. Garrick now brought Irene out, with alterations sufficient to displease the author, yet not sufficient to make the piece pleasing to the audience. The public, however, listened with little emotion, but with much civility, to five acts of monotonous declamation. After nine representations the play was withdrawn. It is, indeed, altogether unsuited to the stage, and, even when perused in the closet, will be found hardly worthy of the author. He had not the slightest notion of what blank verse should be. A change in the last syllable of every other line would make the versification of the Vanity of Human Wishes closely resemble the versification of Irene. The poet, however, cleared, by his benefit nights, and by the sale of the copyright of his tragedy, about three hundred pounds, then a great sum in his estimation.

23. About a year after the representation of Irene, he began to publish a series of short essays on morals, manners, and literature. This species of composition had been brought into fashion by the success of the Tatler, and by the still more brilliant success of the Spectator. A crowd of small writers had vainly attempted to rival Addison. The Lay Monastery, the Censor, the Freethinker, the Plain Dealer, the Champion, and other works of the same kind, had had their short day. None of them had obtained a permanent place in our literature; and they are now to be found only in the libraries of the curious. At length Johnson undertook the adventure in which so many aspirants had failed. In the thirty-sixth year after the appearance of the last number of the Spectator appeared the first number of the Rambler. From March 1750 to March 1752, this paper continued to come out every Tuesday and Saturday.

24. From the first the Rambler was enthusiastically admired by a few eminent men. Richardson, when only five numbers

had appeared, pronounced it equal, if not superior, to the Spectator. Young and Hartley expressed their approbation not less warmly. Bubb Dodington, among whose many faults indifference to the claims of genius and learning cannot be reckoned, solicited the acquaintance of the writer. In consequence probably of the good offices of Dodington, who was then the confidential adviser of Prince Frederic, two of His Royal Highness's gentlemen carried a gracious message to the printing office, and ordered seven copies for Leicester House. But these overtures seem to have been very coldly received. Johnson had had enough of the patronage of the great to last him all his life, and was not disposed to haunt any other door as he had haunted the door of Chesterfield.

25. By the public the Rambler was at first very coldly received. Though the price of a number was only twopence, the sale did not amount to five hundred. The profits were therefore very small. But as soon as the flying leaves were collected and reprinted they became popular. The author lived to see thirteen thousand copies spread over England alone. Separate editions were published for the Scotch and Irish markets. A large party pronounced the style perfect, so absolutely perfect that in some essays it would be impossible for the writer himself to alter a single word for the better. Another party, not less numerous, vehemently accused him of having corrupted the purity of the English tongue. The best critics admitted that his diction was too monotonous, too obviously artificial, and now and then turgid even to absurdity. But they did justice to the acuteness of his observations on morals and manners, to the constant precision and frequent brilliancy of his language, to the weighty and magnificent eloquence of many serious passages, and to the solemn yet pleasing humour of some of the lighter papers. On the question of precedence between Addison and Johnson, a question which, seventy years ago, was much disputed, posterity has

pronounced a decision from which there is no appeal. Sir Roger, his chaplain and his butler, Will Wimble and Will Honeycomb, the Vision of Mirza, the Journal of the Retired Citizen, the Everlasting Club, the Dunmow Flitch, the Loves of Hilpah and Shalum, the Visit to the Exchange, and the Visit to the Abbey, are known to everybody. But many men and women, even of highly cultivated minds, are unacquainted with Squire Bluster and Mrs. Busy, Quisquilius and Venustulus, the Allegory of Wit and Learning, the Chronicle of the Revolutions of a Garret, and the sad fate of Aningait and Ajut.

26. The last Rambler was written in a sad and gloomy hour. Mrs. Johnson had been given over by the physicians. Three days later she died. She left her husband almost broken-hearted. Many people had been surprised to see a man of his genius and learning stooping to every drudgery, and denying himself almost every comfort, for the purpose of supplying a silly, affected old woman with superfluities, which she accepted with but little gratitude. But all his affection had been concentrated on her. He had neither brother nor sister, neither son nor daughter. To him she was beautiful as the Gunnings, and witty as Lady Mary. Her opinion of his writings was more important to him than the voice of the pit of Drury Lane Theatre or the judgment of the Monthly Review. The chief support which had sustained him through the most arduous labour of his life was the hope that she would enjoy the fame and the profit which he anticipated from his Dictionary. She was gone; and in that vast labyrinth of streets, peopled by eight hundred thousand human beings, he was alone. Yet it was necessary for him to set himself, as he expressed it, doggedly to work. After three more laborious years, the Dictionary was at length complete.

27. It had been generally supposed that this great work would be dedicated to the eloquent and accomplished nobleman to whom the prospectus had been addressed. He well

knew the value of such a compliment; and therefore, when the day of publication drew near, he exerted himself to soothe, by a show of zealous and at the same time of delicate and judicious kindness, the pride which he had so cruelly wounded. Since the Ramblers had ceased to appear, the town had been entertained by a journal called The World, to which many men of high rank and fashion contributed. In two successive numbers of the World the Dictionary was, to use the modern phrase, puffed with wonderful skill. The writings of Johnson were warmly praised. It was proposed that he should be invested with the authority of a Dictator, nay, of a Pope, over our language, and that his decisions about the meaning and the spelling of words should be received as final. His two folios, it was said, would of course be bought by everybody who could afford to buy them. It was soon known that these papers were written by Chesterfield. But the just resentment of Johnson was not to be so appeased. In a letter written with singular energy and dignity of thought and language, he repelled the tardy advances of his patron. The Dictionary came forth without a dedication. In the preface the author truly declared that he owed nothing to the great, and described the difficulties with which he had been left to struggle so forcibly and pathetically that the ablest and most malevolent of all the enemies of his fame, Horne Tooke, never could read that passage without tears.

28. The public, on this occasion, did Johnson full justice, and something more than justice. The best lexicographer may well be content if his productions are received by the world with cold esteem. But Johnson's Dictionary was hailed with an enthusiasm such as no similar work has ever excited. It was indeed the first dictionary which could be read with pleasure. The definitions show so much acuteness of thought and command of language, and the passages quoted from poets, divines, and philosophers are so skilfully selected, that a leisure hour may always be very agreeably spent in turning over the

pages. The faults of the book resolve themselves, for the most part, into one great fault. Johnson was a wretched etymologist. He knew little or nothing of any Teutonic language except English, which indeed, as he wrote it, was scarcely a Teutonic language; and thus he was absolutely at the mercy of Junius and Skinner.

29. The Dictionary, though it raised Johnson's fame, added nothing to his pecuniary means. The fifteen hundred guineas which the booksellers had agreed to pay him had been advanced and spent before the last sheets issued from the press. It is painful to relate that, twice in the course of the year which followed the publication of this great work, he was arrested and carried to spunging-houses, and that he was twice indebted for his liberty to his excellent friend Richardson. It was still necessary for the man who had been formally saluted by the highest authority as Dictator of the English language to supply his wants by constant toil. He abridged his Dictionary. He proposed to bring out an edition of Shakspeare by subscription; and many subscribers sent in their names and laid down their money; but he soon found the task so little to his taste that he turned to more attractive employments. He contributed many papers to a new monthly journal, which was called the Literary Magazine. Few of these papers have much interest; but among them was the very best thing that he ever wrote, a masterpiece both of reasoning and of satirical pleasantry, the review of Jenyns's Inquiry into the Nature and Origin of Evil.

30. In the spring of 1758 Johnson put forth the first of a series of essays, entitled The Idler. During two years these essays continued to appear weekly. They were eagerly read, widely circulated, and, indeed, impudently pirated, while they were still in the original form, and had a large sale when collected into volumes. The Idler may be described as a second part of the Rambler, somewhat livelier and somewhat weaker than the first part.

31. While Johnson was busied with his Idlers, his mother, who had accomplished her ninetieth year, died at Lichfield. It was long since he had seen her; but he had not failed to contribute largely, out of his small means, to her comfort. In order to defray the charges of her funeral, and to pay some debts which she had left, he wrote a little book in a single week, and sent off the sheets to the press without reading them over. A hundred pounds were paid him for the copyright; and the purchasers had great cause to be pleased with their bargain; for the book was Rasselas.

32. The success of Rasselas was great, though such ladies as Miss Lydia Languish must have been grievously disappointed when they found that the new volume from the circulating library was little more than a dissertation on the author's favourite theme, the Vanity of Human Wishes; that the Prince of Abyssinia was without a mistress, and the Princess without a lover; and that the story set the hero and the heroine down exactly where it had taken them up. The style was the subject of much eager controversy. The Monthly Review and the Critical Review took different sides. Many readers pronounced the writer a pompous pedant, who would never use a word of two syllables where it was possible to use a word of six, and who could not make a waiting woman relate her adventures without balancing every noun with another noun, and every epithet with another epithet. Another party, not less zealous, cited with delight numerous passages in which weighty meaning was expressed with accuracy and illustrated with splendour. And both the censure and the praise were merited.

33. About the plan of Rasselas little was said by the critics; and yet the faults of the plan might seem to invite severe criticism. Johnson has frequently blamed Shakspeare for neglecting the proprieties of time and place, and for ascribing to one age or nation the manners and opinions of another. Yet Shakspeare has not sinned in this way more grievously

than Johnson. Rasselas and Imlac, Nekayah and Pekuah, are evidently meant to be Abyssinians of the eighteenth century: for the Europe which Imlac describes is the Europe of the eighteenth century; and the inmates of the Happy Valley talk familiarly of that law of gravitation which Newton discovered, and which was not fully received even at Cambridge till the eighteenth century. What a real company of Abyssinians would have been may be learned from Bruce's Travels. But Johnson, not content with turning filthy savages, ignorant of their letters, and gorged with raw steaks cut from living cows, into philosophers as eloquent and enlightened as himself or his friend Burke, and into ladies as highly accomplished as Mrs. Lennox or Mrs. Sheridan, transferred the whole domestic system of England to Egypt. Into a land of harems, a land of polygamy, a land where women are married without ever being seen, he introduced the flirtations and jealousies of our ball-rooms. In a land where there is boundless liberty of divorce, wedlock is described as the indissoluble compact. "A youth and maiden meeting by chance, or brought together by artifice, exchange glances, reciprocate civilities, go home, and dream of each other. Such," says Rasselas, "is the common process of marriage." Such it may have been, and may still be, in London, but assuredly not at Cairo. A writer who was guilty of such improprieties had little right to blame the poet who made Hector quote Aristotle, and represented Julio Romano as flourishing in the days of the oracle of Delphi.

34. By such exertions as have been described, Johnson supported himself till the year 1762. In that year a great change in his circumstances took place. He had from a child been an enemy of the reigning dynasty. His Jacobite prejudices had been exhibited with little disguise both in his works and in his conversation. Even in his massy and elaborate Dictionary, he had, with a strange want of taste and judgment, inserted bitter and contumelious reflections on the Whig party.

The excise, which was a favourite resource of Whig financiers, he had designated as a hateful tax. He had railed against the commissioners of excise in language so coarse that they had seriously thought of prosecuting him. He had with difficulty been prevented from holding up the Lord Privy Seal by name as an example of the meaning of the word "renegade." A pension he had defined as pay given to a state hireling to betray his country; a pensioner as a slave of state hired by a stipend to obey a master. It seemed unlikely that the author of these definitions would himself be pensioned. But that was a time of wonders. George the Third had ascended the throne; and had, in the course of a few months, disgusted many of the old friends and conciliated many of the old enemies of his house. The city was becoming mutinous. Oxford was becoming loyal. Cavendishes and Bentincks were murmuring. Somersets and Wyndhams were hastening to kiss hands. The head of the treasury was now Lord Bute, who was a Tory, and could have no objection to Johnson's Toryism. Bute wished to be thought a patron of men of letters; and Johnson was one of the most eminent and one of the most needy men of letters in Europe. A pension of three hundred a year was graciously offered, and with very little hesitation accepted.

35. This event produced a change in Johnson's whole way of life. For the first time since his boyhood he no longer felt the daily goad urging him to the daily toil. He was at liberty, after thirty years of anxiety and drudgery, to indulge his constitutional indolence, to lie in bed till two in the afternoon, and to sit up talking till four in the morning, without fearing either the printer's devil or the sheriff's officer.

36. One laborious task indeed he had bound himself to perform. He had received large subscriptions for his promised edition of Shakspeare; he had lived on those subscriptions during some years; and he could not without disgrace omit to perform his part of the contract. His friends repeatedly

exhorted him to make an effort; and he repeatedly resolved to do so. But, notwithstanding their exhortations and his resolutions, month followed month, year followed year, and nothing was done. He prayed fervently against his idleness; he determined, as often as he received the sacrament, that he would no longer doze away and trifle away his time; but the spell under which he lay resisted prayer and sacrament. His private notes at this time are made up of self-reproaches. "My indolence," he wrote on Easter eve in 1764, "has sunk into grosser sluggishness. A kind of strange oblivion has overspread me, so that I know not what has become of the last year." Easter 1765 came, and found him still in the same state. "My time," he wrote, "has been unprofitably spent, and seems as a dream that has left nothing behind. My memory grows confused, and I know not how the days pass over me." Happily for his honour, the charm which held him captive was at length broken by no gentle or friendly hand. He had been weak enough to pay serious attention to a story about a ghost which haunted a house in Cock Lane, and had actually gone himself with some of his friends, at one in the morning, to St. John's Church, Clerkenwell, in the hope of receiving a communication from the perturbed spirit. But the spirit, though adjured with all solemnity, remained obstinately silent; and it soon appeared that a naughty girl of eleven had been amusing herself by making fools of so many philosophers. Churchill, who, confident in his powers, drunk with popularity, and burning with party spirit, was looking for some man of established fame and Tory politics to insult, celebrated the Cock Lane Ghost in three cantos, nicknamed Johnson Pomposo, asked where the book was which had been so long promised and so liberally paid for, and directly accused the great moralist of cheating. This terrible word proved effectual; and in October 1765 appeared, after a delay of nine years, the new edition of Shakspeare.

37. This publication saved Johnson's character for honesty, but added nothing to the fame of his abilities and learning. The preface, though it contains some good passages, is not in his best manner. The most valuable notes are those in which he had an opportunity of showing how attentively he had during many years observed human life and human nature. The best specimen is the note on the character of Polonius. Nothing so good is to be found even in Wilhelm Meister's admirable examination of Hamlet. But here praise must end. It would be difficult to name a more slovenly, a more worthless edition of any great classic. The reader may turn over play after play without finding one happy conjectural emendation, or one ingenious and satisfactory explanation of a passage which had baffled preceding commentators. Johnson had, in his prospectus, told the world that he was peculiarly fitted for the task which he had undertaken, because he had, as a lexicographer, been under the necessity of taking a wider view of the English language than any of his predecessors. That his knowledge of our literature was extensive is indisputable. But, unfortunately, he had altogether neglected that very part of our literature with which it is especially desirable that an editor of Shakspeare should be conversant. It is dangerous to assert a negative. Yet little will be risked by the assertion, that in the two folio volumes of the English Dictionary there is not a single passage quoted from any dramatist of the Elizabethan age, except Shakspeare and Ben. Even from Ben the quotations are few. Johnson might easily, in a few months, have made himself well acquainted with every old play that was extant. But it never seems to have occurred to him that this was a necessary preparation for the work which he had undertaken. He would doubtless have admitted that it would be the height of absurdity in a man who was not familiar with the works of Æschylus and Euripides to publish an edition of Sophocles. Yet he ventured to publish an edition of Shakspeare,

without having ever in his life, as far as can be discovered, read a single scene of Massinger, Ford, Decker, Webster, Marlow, Beaumont, or Fletcher. His detractors were noisy and scurrilous. Those who most loved and honoured him had little to say in praise of the manner in which he had discharged the duty of a commentator. He had, however, acquitted himself of a debt which had long lain heavy on his conscience; and he sank back into the repose from which the sting of satire had roused him. He long continued to live upon the fame which he had already won. He was honoured by the University of Oxford with a Doctor's degree, by the Royal Academy with a professorship, and by the King with an interview, in which his Majesty most graciously expressed a hope that so excellent a writer would not cease to write. In the interval, however, between 1765 and 1775 Johnson published only two or three political tracts, the longest of which he could have produced in forty-eight hours, if he had worked as he worked on the Life of Savage and on Rasselas.

38. But, though his pen was now idle, his tongue was active. The influence exercised by his conversation, directly upon those with whom he lived, and indirectly on the whole literary world, was altogether without a parallel. His colloquial talents were indeed of the highest order. He had strong sense, quick discernment, wit, humour, immense knowledge of literature and of life, and an infinite store of curious anecdotes. As respected style, he spoke far better than he wrote. Every sentence which dropped from his lips was as correct in structure as the most nicely balanced period of the Rambler. But in his talk there were no pompous triads, and little more than a fair proportion of words in *osity* and *ation*. All was simplicity, ease, and vigour. He uttered his short, weighty, and pointed sentences with a power of voice, and a justness and energy of emphasis, of which the effect was rather increased than diminished by the rollings of his huge form, and by the asthmatic

gaspings and puffings in which the peals of his eloquence generally ended. Nor did the laziness which made him unwilling to sit down to his desk prevent him from giving instruction or entertainment orally. To discuss questions of taste, of learning, of casuistry, in language so exact and so forcible that it might have been printed without the alteration of a word, was to him no exertion, but a pleasure. He loved, as he said, to fold his legs and have his talk out. He was ready to bestow the overflowings of his full mind on anybody who would start a subject, on a fellow-passenger in a stage coach, or on the person who sate at the same table with him in an eating-house. But his conversation was nowhere so brilliant and striking as when he was surrounded by a few friends, whose abilities and knowledge enabled them, as he once expressed it, to send him back every ball that he threw. Some of these, in 1764, formed themselves into a club, which gradually became a formidable power in the commonwealth of letters. The verdicts pronounced by this conclave on new books were speedily known over all London, and were sufficient to sell off a whole edition in a day, or to condemn the sheets to the service of the trunk-maker and the pastry-cook. Nor shall we think this strange when we consider what great and various talents and acquirements met in the little fraternity. Goldsmith was the representative of poetry and light literature, Reynolds of the arts, Burke of political eloquence and political philosophy. There, too, were Gibbon, the greatest historian, and Jones, the greatest linguist, of the age. Garrick brought to the meetings his inexhaustible pleasantry, his incomparable mimicry, and his consummate knowledge of stage effect. Among the most constant attendants were two high-born and high-bred gentlemen, closely bound together by friendship, but of widely different characters and habits; Bennet Langton, distinguished by his skill in Greek literature, by the orthodoxy of his opinions, and by the sanctity of his life; and Topham Beauclerk, renowned for his amours,

his knowledge of the gay world, his fastidious taste, and his sarcastic wit. To predominate over such a society was not easy. Yet even over such a society Johnson predominated. Burke might indeed have disputed the supremacy to which others were under the necessity of submitting. But Burke, though not generally a very patient listener, was content to take the second part when Johnson was present; and the club itself, consisting of so many eminent men, is to this day popularly designated as Johnson's Club.

39. Among the members of this celebrated body was one to whom it has owed the greater part of its celebrity, yet who was regarded with little respect by his brethren, and had not without difficulty obtained a seat among them. This was James Boswell, a young Scotch lawyer, heir to an honourable name and a fair estate. That he was a coxcomb and a bore, weak, vain, pushing, curious, garrulous, was obvious to all who were acquainted with him. That he could not reason, that he had no wit, no humour, no eloquence, is apparent from his writings. And yet his writings are read beyond the Mississippi, and under the Southern Cross, and are likely to be read as long as the English exists, either as a living or as a dead language. Nature had made him a slave and an idolater. His mind resembled those creepers which the botanists call parasites, and which can subsist only by clinging round the stems and imbibing the juices of stronger plants. He must have fastened himself on somebody. He might have fastened himself on Wilkes, and have become the fiercest patriot in the Bill of Rights Society. He might have fastened himself on Whitfield, and have become the loudest field preacher among the Calvinistic Methodists. In a happy hour he fastened himself on Johnson. The pair might seem ill matched. For Johnson had early been prejudiced against Boswell's country. To a man of Johnson's strong understanding and irritable temper, the silly egotism and adulation of Boswell must have

been as teasing as the constant buzz of a fly. Johnson hated to be questioned; and Boswell was eternally catechising him on all kinds of subjects, and sometimes propounded such questions as "What would you do, sir, if you were locked up in a tower with a baby?" Johnson was a water drinker; and Boswell was a wine-bibber, and indeed little better than a habitual sot. It was impossible that there should be perfect harmony between two such companions. Indeed, the great man was sometimes provoked into fits of passion in which he said things which the small man, during a few hours, seriously resented. Every quarrel, however, was soon made up. During twenty years the disciple continued to worship the master: the master continued to scold the disciple, to sneer at him, and to love him. The two friends ordinarily resided at a great distance from each other. Boswell practised in the Parliament House of Edinburgh, and could pay only occasional visits to London. During those visits his chief business was to watch Johnson, to discover all Johnson's habits, to turn the conversation to subjects about which Johnson was likely to say something remarkable, and to fill quarto note books with minutes of what Johnson had said. In this way were gathered the materials out of which was afterwards constructed the most interesting biographical work in the world.

40. Soon after the club began to exist, Johnson formed a connection less important indeed to his fame, but much more important to his happiness, than his connection with Boswell. Henry Thrale, one of the most opulent brewers in the kingdom, a man of sound and cultivated understanding, rigid principles, and liberal spirit, was married to one of those clever, kind-hearted, engaging, vain, pert young women, who are perpetually doing or saying what is not exactly right, but who, do or say what they may, are always agreeable. In 1765 the Thrales became acquainted with Johnson, and the acquaintance ripened fast into friendship. They were astonished and

delighted by the brilliancy of his conversation. They were flattered by finding that a man so widely celebrated, preferred their house to any other in London. Even the peculiarities which seemed to unfit him for civilised society, his gesticulations, his rollings, his puffings, his mutterings, the strange way in which he put on his clothes, the ravenous eagerness with which he devoured his dinner, his fits of melancholy, his fits of anger, his frequent rudeness, his occasional ferocity, increased the interest which his new associates took in him. For these things were the cruel marks left behind by a life which had been one long conflict with disease and with adversity. In a vulgar hack writer such oddities would have excited only disgust. But in a man of genius, learning, and virtue their effect was to add pity to admiration and esteem. Johnson soon had an apartment at the brewery in Southwark, and a still more pleasant apartment at the villa of his friends on Streatham Common. A large part of every year he passed in those abodes, abodes which must have seemed magnificent and luxurious indeed, when compared with the dens in which he had generally been lodged. But his chief pleasures were derived from what the astronomer of his Abyssinian tale called "the endearing elegance of female friendship." Mrs. Thrale rallied him, soothed him, coaxed him, and, if she sometimes provoked him by her flippancy, made ample amends by listening to his reproofs with angelic sweetness of temper. When he was diseased in body and in mind, she was the most tender of nurses. No comfort that wealth could purchase, no contrivance that womanly ingenuity, set to work by womanly compassion, could devise, was wanting to his sick-room. He requited her kindness by an affection pure as the affection of a father, yet delicately tinged with a gallantry which, though awkward, must have been more flattering than the attentions of a crowd of the fools who gloried in the names, now obsolete, of Buck and Maccaroni. It should seem that a full half of

Johnson's life, during about sixteen years, was passed under the roof of the Thrales. He accompanied the family sometimes to Bath, and sometimes to Brighton, once to Wales, and once to Paris. But he had at the same time a house in one of the narrow and gloomy courts on the north of Fleet Street. In the garrets was his library, a large and miscellaneous collection of books, falling to pieces and begrimed with dust. On a lower floor he sometimes, but very rarely, regaled a friend with a plain dinner, a veal pie, or a leg of lamb and spinage, and a rice pudding. Nor was the dwelling uninhabited during his long absences. It was the home of the most extraordinary assemblage of inmates that ever was brought together. At the head of the establishment Johnson had placed an old lady named Williams, whose chief recommendations were her blindness and her poverty. But, in spite of her murmurs and reproaches, he gave an asylum to another lady who was as poor as herself, Mrs. Desmoulins, whose family he had known many years before in Staffordshire. Room was found for the daughter of Mrs. Desmoulins, and for another destitute damsel, who was generally addressed as Miss Carmichael, but whom her generous host called Polly. An old quack doctor named Levett, who bled and dosed coal-heavers and hackney coachmen, and received for fees crusts of bread, bits of bacon, glasses of gin, and sometimes a little copper, completed this strange menagerie. All these poor creatures were at constant war with each other, and with Johnson's negro servant Frank. Sometimes, indeed, they transferred their hostilities from the servant to the master, complained that a better table was not kept for them, and railed or maundered till their benefactor was glad to make his escape to Streatham, or to the Mitre Tavern. And yet he, who was generally the haughtiest and most irritable of mankind, who was but too prompt to resent anything which looked like a slight on the part of a purse-proud bookseller, or of a noble and powerful patron, bore patiently from

mendicants, who, but for his bounty, must have gone to the workhouse, insults more provoking than those for which he had knocked down Osborne and bidden defiance to Chesterfield. Year after year Mrs. Williams and Mrs. Desmoulins, Polly, and Levett continued to torment him and to live upon him.

41. The course of life which has been described was interrupted in Johnson's sixty-fourth year by an important event. He had early read an account of the Hebrides, and had been much interested by learning that there was so near him a land peopled by a race which was still as rude and simple as in the middle ages. A wish to become intimately acquainted with a state of society so utterly unlike all that he had ever seen frequently crossed his mind. But it is not probable that his curiosity would have overcome his habitual sluggishness, and his love of the smoke, the mud, and the cries of London, had not Boswell importuned him to attempt the adventure, and offered to be his squire. At length, in August 1773, Johnson crossed the Highland line, and plunged courageously into what was then considered, by most Englishmen, as a dreary and perilous wilderness. After wandering about two months through the Celtic region, sometimes in rude boats which did not protect him from the rain, and sometimes on small shaggy ponies which could hardly bear his weight, he returned to his old haunts with a mind full of new images and new theories. During the following year he employed himself in recording his adventures. About the beginning of 1775, his Journey to the Hebrides was published, and was, during some weeks, the chief subject of conversation in all circles in which any attention was paid to literature. The book is still read with pleasure. The narrative is entertaining; the speculations, whether sound or unsound, are always ingenious; and the style, though too stiff and pompous, is somewhat easier and more graceful than that of his early writings. His prejudice against the Scotch had at

length become little more than matter of jest; and whatever remained of the old feeling had been effectually removed by the kind and respectful hospitality with which he had been received in every part of Scotland. It was, of course, not to be expected that an Oxonian Tory should praise the Presbyterian polity and ritual, or that an eye accustomed to the hedgerows and parks of England should not be struck by the bareness of Berwickshire and East Lothian. But even in censure Johnson's tone is not unfriendly. The most enlightened Scotchmen, with Lord Mansfield at their head, were well pleased. But some foolish and ignorant Scotchmen were moved to anger by a little unpalatable truth which was mingled with much eulogy, and assailed him whom they chose to consider as the enemy of their country, with libels much more dishonourable to their country than anything that he had ever said or written. They published paragraphs in the newspapers, articles in the magazines, sixpenny pamphlets, five-shilling books. One scribbler abused Johnson for being blear-eyed; another for being a pensioner; a third informed the world that one of the Doctor's uncles had been convicted of felony in Scotland, and had found that there was in that country one tree capable of supporting the weight of an Englishman. Macpherson, whose Fingal had been proved in the Journey to be an impudent forgery, threatened to take vengeance with a cane. The only effect of this threat was that Johnson reiterated the charge of forgery in the most contemptuous terms, and walked about, during some time, with a cudgel, which, if the impostor had not been too wise to encounter it, would assuredly have descended upon him, to borrow the sublime language of his own epic poem, "like a hammer on the red son of the furnace."

42. Of other assailants Johnson took no notice whatever. He had early resolved never to be drawn into controversy; and he adhered to his resolution with a steadfastness which

is the more extraordinary, because he was, both intellectually and morally, of the stuff of which controversialists are made. In conversation, he was a singularly eager, acute, and pertinacious disputant. When at a loss for good reasons, he had recourse to sophistry; and, when heated by altercation, he made unsparing use of sarcasm and invective. But, when he took his pen in his hand, his whole character seemed to be changed. A hundred bad writers misrepresented him and reviled him; but not one of the hundred could boast of having been thought by him worthy of a refutation, or even of a retort. The Kenricks, Campbells, MacNicols, and Hendersons did their best to annoy him, in the hope that he would give them importance by answering them. But the reader will in vain search his works for any allusion to Kenrick or Campbell, to MacNicol or Henderson. One Scotchman, bent on vindicating the fame of Scotch learning, defied him to the combat in a detestable Latin hexameter.

"Maxime, si tu vis, cupio contendere tecum."

But Johnson took no notice of the challenge. He had learned, both from his own observation and from literary history, in which he was deeply read, that the place of books in the public estimation is fixed, not by what is written about them, but by what is written in them; and that an author whose works are likely to live is very unwise if he stoops to wrangle with detractors whose works are certain to die. He always maintained that fame was a shuttlecock which could be kept up only by being beaten back, as well as beaten forward, and which would soon fall if there were only one battledore. No saying was oftener in his mouth than that fine apophthegm of Bentley, that no man was ever written down but by himself.

43. Unhappily, a few months after the appearance of the Journey to the Hebrides, Johnson did what none of his

envious assailants could have done, and to a certain extent succeeded in writing himself down. The disputes between England and her American colonies had reached a point at which no amicable adjustment was possible. Civil war was evidently impending; and the ministers seem to have thought that the eloquence of Johnson might with advantage be employed to inflame the nation against the opposition here, and against the rebels beyond the Atlantic. He had already written two or three tracts in defence of the foreign and domestic policy of the government; and those tracts, though hardly worthy of him, were much superior to the crowd of pamphlets which lay on the counters of Almon and Stockdale. But his Taxation no Tyranny was a pitiable failure. The very title was a silly phrase, which can have been recommended to his choice by nothing but a jingling alliteration which he ought to have despised. The arguments were such as boys use in debating societies. The pleasantry was as awkward as the gambols of a hippopotamus. Even Boswell was forced to own that, in this unfortunate piece, he could detect no trace of his master's powers. The general opinion was that the strong faculties which had produced the Dictionary and the Rambler were beginning to feel the effect of time and of disease, and that the old man would best consult his credit by writing no more.

44. But this was a great mistake. Johnson had failed, not because his mind was less vigorous than when he wrote Rasselas in the evenings of a week, but because he had foolishly chosen, or suffered others to choose for him, a subject such as he would at no time have been competent to treat. He was in no sense a statesman. He never willingly read or thought or talked about affairs of state. He loved biography, literary history, the history of manners; but political history was positively distasteful to him. The question at issue between the colonies and the mother country was a question about

which he had really nothing to say. He failed, therefore, as the greatest men must fail when they attempt to do that for which they are unfit; as Burke would have failed if Burke had tried to write comedies like those of Sheridan; as Reynolds would have failed if Reynolds had tried to paint landscapes like those of Wilson. Happily, Johnson soon had an opportunity of proving most signally that his failure was not to be ascribed to intellectual decay.

45. On Easter eve 1777, some persons, deputed by a meeting which consisted of forty of the first booksellers in London, called upon him. Though he had some scruples about doing business at that season, he received his visitors with much civility. They came to inform him that a new edition of the English poets, from Cowley downwards, was in contemplation, and to ask him to furnish short biographical prefaces. He readily undertook the task, a task for which he was pre-eminently qualified. His knowledge of the literary history of England since the Restoration was unrivalled. That knowledge he had derived partly from books, and partly from sources which had long been closed; from old Grub Street traditions; from the talk of forgotten poetasters and pamphleteers who had long been lying in parish vaults; from the recollections of such men as Gilbert Walmesley, who had conversed with the wits of Button's; Cibber, who had mutilated the plays of two generations of dramatists; Orrery, who had been admitted to the society of Swift; and Savage, who had rendered services of no very honourable kind to Pope. The biographer therefore sate down to his task with a mind full of matter. He had at first intended to give only a paragraph to every minor poet, and only four or five pages to the greatest name. But the flood of anecdote and criticism overflowed the narrow channel. The work, which was originally meant to consist only of a few sheets, swelled into ten volumes, small volumes, it is true, and not closely printed. The first four appeared in 1779, the remaining six in 1781.

46. The Lives of the Poets are, on the whole, the best of Johnson's works. The narratives are as entertaining as any novel. The remarks on life and on human nature are eminently shrewd and profound. The criticisms are often excellent, and, even when grossly and provokingly unjust, well deserve to be studied. For, however erroneous they may be, they are never silly. They are the judgments of a mind trammelled by prejudice and deficient in sensibility, but vigorous and acute. They therefore generally contain a portion of valuable truth which deserves to be separated from the alloy; and, at the very worst, they mean something, a praise to which much of what is called criticism in our time has no pretensions.

47. Savage's Life Johnson reprinted nearly as it had appeared in 1744. Whoever, after reading that life, will turn to the other lives will be struck by the difference of style. Since Johnson had been at ease in his circumstances he had written little and had talked much. When, therefore, he, after the lapse of years, resumed his pen, the mannerism which he had contracted while he was in the constant habit of elaborate composition was less perceptible than formerly; and his diction frequently had a colloquial ease which it had formerly wanted. The improvement may be discerned by a skilful critic in the Journey to the Hebrides, and in the Lives of the Poets is so obvious that it cannot escape the notice of the most careless reader.

48. Among the lives the best are perhaps those of Cowley, Dryden, and Pope. The very worst is, beyond all doubt, that of Gray.

49. This great work at once became popular. There was, indeed, much just and much unjust censure: but even those who were loudest in blame were attracted by the book in spite of themselves. Malone computed the gains of the publishers at five or six thousand pounds. But the writer was very poorly remunerated. Intending at first to write very

short prefaces, he had stipulated for only two hundred guineas. The booksellers, when they saw how far his performance had surpassed his promise, added only another hundred. Indeed, Johnson, though he did not despise, or affect to despise, money, and though his strong sense and long experience ought to have qualified him to protect his own interests, seems to have been singularly unskilful and unlucky in his literary bargains. He was generally reputed the first English writer of his time. Yet several writers of his time sold their copyrights for sums such as he never ventured to ask. To give a single instance, Robertson received four thousand five hundred pounds for the History of Charles V.; and it is no disrespect to the memory of Robertson to say that the History of Charles V. is both a less valuable and a less amusing book than the Lives of the Poets.

50. Johnson was now in his seventy-second year. The infirmities of age were coming fast upon him. That inevitable event of which he never thought without horror was brought near to him; and his whole life was darkened by the shadow of death. He had often to pay the cruel price of longevity. Every year he lost what could never be replaced. The strange dependents to whom he had given shelter, and to whom, in spite of their faults, he was strongly attached by habit, dropped off one by one; and, in the silence of his home, he regretted even the noise of their scolding matches. The kind and generous Thrale was no more; and it would have been well if his wife had been laid beside him. But she survived to be the laughing-stock of those who had envied her, and to draw from the eyes of the old man who had loved her beyond anything in the world tears far more bitter than he would have shed over her grave. With some estimable and many agreeable qualities, she was not made to be independent. The control of a mind more steadfast than her own was necessary to her respectability. While she was restrained

by her husband, a man of sense and firmness, indulgent to her taste in trifles, but always the undisputed master of his house, her worst offences had been impertinent jokes, white lies, and short fits of pettishness ending in sunny good humour. But he was gone; and she was left an opulent widow of forty, with strong sensibility, volatile fancy, and slender judgment. She soon fell in love with a music-master from Brescia, in whom nobody but herself could discover anything to admire. Her pride, and perhaps some better feelings, struggled hard against this degrading passion. But the struggle irritated her nerves, soured her temper, and at length endangered her health. Conscious that her choice was one which Johnson could not approve, she became desirous to escape from his inspection. Her manner towards him changed. She was sometimes cold and sometimes petulant. She did not conceal her joy when he left Streatham; she never pressed him to return; and, if he came unbidden, she received him in a manner which convinced him he was no longer a welcome guest. He took the very intelligible hints which she gave. He read, for the last time, a chapter of the Greek Testament in the library which had been formed by himself. In a solemn and tender prayer he commended the house and its inmates to the Divine protection, and, with emotions which choked his voice and convulsed his powerful frame, left for ever that beloved home for the gloomy and desolate house behind Fleet Street, where the few and evil days which still remained to him were to run out. Here, in June 1783, he had a paralytic stroke, from which, however, he recovered, and which does not appear to have at all impaired his intellectual faculties. But other maladies came thick upon him. His asthma tormented him day and night. Dropsical symptoms made their appearance. While sinking under a complication of diseases, he heard that the woman whose friendship had been the chief happiness of sixteen years of his life had married an

Italian fiddler; that all London was crying shame upon her; and that the newspapers and magazines were filled with allusions to the Ephesian matron, and the two pictures in Hamlet. He vehemently said that he would try to forget her existence. He never uttered her name. Every memorial of her which met his eye he flung into the fire. She meanwhile fled from the laughter and hisses of her countrymen and countrywomen to a land where she was unknown, hastened across Mount Cenis, and learned, while passing a merry Christmas of concerts and lemonade parties at Milan, that the great man with whose name hers is inseparably associated had ceased to exist.

51. He had, in spite of much mental and much bodily affliction, clung vehemently to life. The feeling described in that fine but gloomy paper which closes the series of his Idlers seemed to grow stronger in him as his last hour drew near. He fancied that he should be able to draw his breath more easily in a southern climate, and would probably have set out for Rome and Naples, but for his fear of the expense of the journey. That expense, indeed, he had the means of defraying; for he had laid up about two thousand pounds, the fruit of labours which had made the fortune of several publishers. But he was unwilling to break in upon this hoard, and he seems to have wished even to keep its existence a secret. Some of his friends hoped that the government might be induced to increase his pension to six hundred pounds a year, but this hope was disappointed, and he resolved to stand one English winter more. That winter was his last. His legs grew weaker; his breath grew shorter; the fatal water gathered fast, in spite of incisions which he, courageous against pain, but timid against death, urged his surgeons to make deeper and deeper. Though the tender care which had mitigated his sufferings during months of sickness at Streatham was withdrawn, he was not left desolate. The ablest physicians

and surgeons attended him, and refused to accept fees from him. Burke parted from him with deep emotion. Windham sate much in the sick-room, arranged the pillows, and sent his own servant to watch at night by the bed. Frances Burney, whom the old man had cherished with fatherly kindness, stood weeping at the door; while Langton, whose piety eminently qualified him to be an adviser and comforter at such a time, received the last pressure of his friend's hand within. When at length the moment, dreaded through so many years, came close, the dark cloud passed away from Johnson's mind. His temper became unusually patient and gentle; he ceased to think with terror of death, and of that which lies beyond death; and he spoke much of the mercy of God, and of the propitiation of Christ. In this serene frame of mind he died on the 13th of December 1784. He was laid, a week later, in Westminster Abbey, among the eminent men of whom he had been the historian, — Cowley and Denham, Dryden and Congreve, Gay, Prior, and Addison.

52. Since his death the popularity of his works — the Lives of the Poets, and, perhaps, the Vanity of Human Wishes, excepted — has greatly diminished. His Dictionary has been altered by editors till it can scarcely be called his. An allusion to his Rambler or his Idler is not readily apprehended in literary circles. The fame even of Rasselas has grown somewhat dim. But, though the celebrity of the writings may have declined, the celebrity of the writer, strange to say, is as great as ever. Boswell's book has done for him more than the best of his own books could do. The memory of other authors is kept alive by their works. But the memory of Johnson keeps many of his works alive. The old philosopher is still among us in the brown coat with the metal buttons and the shirt which ought to be at wash, blinking, puffing, rolling his head, drumming with his fingers, tearing his meat like a tiger, and swallowing his tea in oceans. No human being who has been more

than seventy years in the grave is so well known to us. And it is but just to say that our intimate acquaintance with what he would himself have called the anfractuosities of his intellect and of his temper serves only to strengthen our conviction that he was both a great and a good man.

FROM MACAULAY'S ESSAY ON CROKER'S EDITION OF BOSWELL'S LIFE OF JOHNSON

(*Edinburgh Review, September, 1831*)

1. The Life of Johnson is assuredly a great, a very great work. Homer is not more decidedly the first of heroic poets, Shakspeare is not more decidedly the first of dramatists, Demosthenes is not more decidedly the first of orators, than Boswell is the first of biographers. He has no second. He has distanced all his competitors so decidedly that it is not worth while to place them. Eclipse is first, and the rest nowhere.

2. We are not sure that there is in the whole history of the human intellect so strange a phænomenon as this book. Many of the greatest men that ever lived have written biography. Boswell was one of the smallest men that ever lived, and he has beaten them all. He was, if we are to give any credit to his own account or to the united testimony of all who knew him, a man of the meanest and feeblest intellect. Johnson described him as a fellow who had missed his only chance of immortality by not having been alive when the Dunciad was written. Beauclerk used his name as a proverbial expression for a bore. He was the laughing-stock of the whole of that brilliant society which has owed to him the greater part of its fame. He was always laying himself at the feet of some eminent man, and begging to be spit upon and trampled upon. He was always earning some ridiculous nickname, and then "binding it as a

crown unto him," not merely in metaphor, but literally. He exhibited himself, at the Shakspeare Jubilee, to all the crowd which filled Stratford-on-Avon, with a placard round his hat bearing the inscription of Corsica Boswell. In his Tour he proclaimed to all the world that at Edinburgh he was known by the appellation of Paoli Boswell. Servile and impertinent, shallow and pedantic, a bigot and a sot, bloated with family pride, and eternally blustering about the dignity of a born gentleman, yet stooping to be a tale-bearer, an eavesdropper, a common butt in the taverns of London, so curious to know every body who was talked about, that, Tory and high Churchman as he was, he manœuvred, we have been told, for an introduction to Tom Paine, so vain of the most childish distinctions, that when he had been to court, he drove to the office where his book was printing without changing his clothes, and summoned all the printer's devils to admire his new ruffles and sword; such was this man, and such he was content and proud to be. Every thing which another man would have hidden, every thing the publication of which would have made another man hang himself, was matter of gay and clamorous exultation to his weak and diseased mind. What silly things he said, what bitter retorts he provoked, how at one place he was troubled with evil presentiments which came to nothing, how at another place, on waking from a drunken doze, he read the prayerbook and took a hair of the dog that had bitten him, how he went to see men hanged and came away maudlin, how he added five hundred pounds to the fortune of one of his babies because she was not scared at Johnson's ugly face, how he was frightened out of his wits at sea, and how the sailors quieted him as they would have quieted a child, how tipsy he was at Lady Cork's one evening and how much his merriment annoyed the ladies, how impertinent he was to the Duchess of Argyle and with what stately contempt she put down his impertinence, how Colonel Macleod sneered to his face at his impudent

obtrusiveness, how his father and the very wife of his bosom laughed and fretted at his fooleries; all these things he proclaimed to all the world, as if they had been subjects for pride and ostentatious rejoicing. All the caprices of his temper, all the illusions of his vanity, all his hypochondriac whimsies, all his castles in the air, he displayed with a cool self-complacency, a perfect unconsciousness that he was making a fool of himself, to which it is impossible to find a parallel in the whole history of mankind. He has used many people ill; but assuredly he has used nobody so ill as himself.

3. That such a man should have written one of the best books in the world is strange enough. But this is not all. Many persons who have conducted themselves foolishly in active life, and whose conversation has indicated no superior powers of mind, have left us valuable works. Goldsmith was very justly described by one of his contemporaries as an inspired idiot, and by another as a being

> "Who wrote like an angel, and talked like poor Poll."

La Fontaine was in society a mere simpleton. His blunders would not come in amiss among the stories of Hierocles. But these men attained literary eminence in spite of their weaknesses. Boswell attained it by reason of his weaknesses. If he had not been a great fool, he would never have been a great writer. Without all the qualities which made him the jest and the torment of those among whom he lived, without the officiousness, the inquisitiveness, the effrontery, the toad-eating, the insensibility to all reproof, he never could have produced so excellent a book. He was a slave, proud of his servitude, a Paul Pry, convinced that his own curiosity and garrulity were virtues, an unsafe companion who never scrupled to repay the most liberal hospitality by the basest violation of confidence, a man without delicacy, without shame, without sense enough to know when he was hurting the feelings of

others or when he was exposing himself to derision; and because he was all this, he has, in an important department of literature, immeasurably surpassed such writers as Tacitus, Clarendon, Alfieri, and his own idol Johnson.

4. Of the talents which ordinarily raise men to eminence as writers, Boswell had absolutely none. There is not in all his books a single remark of his own on literature, politics, religion, or society, which is not either commonplace or absurd. His dissertations on hereditary gentility, on the slave-trade, and on the entailing of landed estates, may serve as examples. To say that these passages are sophistical would be to pay them an extravagant compliment. They have no pretence to argument, or even to meaning. He has reported innumerable observations made by himself in the course of conversation. Of those observations we do not remember one which is above the intellectual capacity of a boy of fifteen. He has printed many of his own letters, and in these letters he is always ranting or twaddling. Logic, eloquence, wit, taste, all those things which are generally considered as making a book valuable, were utterly wanting to him. He had, indeed, a quick observation and a retentive memory. These qualities, if he had been a man of sense and virtue, would scarcely of themselves have sufficed to make him conspicuous; but, because he was a dunce, a parasite, and a coxcomb, they have made him immortal.

5. Those parts of his book which, considered abstractedly, are most utterly worthless, are delightful when we read them as illustrations of the character of the writer. Bad in themselves, they are good dramatically, like the nonsense of Justice Shallow, the clipped English of Dr. Caius, or the misplaced consonants of Fluellen. Of all confessors, Boswell is the most candid. Other men who have pretended to lay open their own hearts, Rousseau, for example, and Lord Byron, have evidently written with a constant view to effect, and are to be then most distrusted when they seem to be most sincere.

There is scarcely any man who would not rather accuse himself of great crimes and of dark and tempestuous passions, than proclaim all his little vanities and wild fancies. It would be easier to find a person who would avow actions like those of Cæsar Borgia or Danton, than one who would publish a daydream like those of Alnaschar and Malvolio. Those weaknesses which most men keep covered up in the most secret places of the mind, not to be disclosed to the eye of friendship or of love, were precisely the weaknesses which Boswell paraded before all the world. He was perfectly frank, because the weakness of his understanding and the tumult of his spirits prevented him from knowing when he made himself ridiculous. His book resembles nothing so much as the conversation of the inmates of the Palace of Truth.

6. His fame is great; and it will, we have no doubt, be lasting; but it is fame of a peculiar kind, and indeed marvellously resembles infamy. We remember no other case in which the world has made so great a distinction between a book and its author. In general, the book and the author are considered as one. To admire the book is to admire the author. The case of Boswell is an exception, we think the only exception, to this rule. His work is universally allowed to be interesting, instructive, eminently original: yet it has brought him nothing but contempt. All the world reads it: all the world delights in it: yet we do not remember ever to have read or ever to have heard any expression of respect and admiration for the man to whom we owe so much instruction and amusement. While edition after edition of his book was coming forth, his son, as Mr. Croker tells us, was ashamed of it, and hated to hear it mentioned. This feeling was natural and reasonable. Sir Alexander saw that, in proportion to the celebrity of the work, was the degradation of the author. The very editors of this unfortunate gentleman's books have forgotten their allegiance, and, like those Puritan casuists who

took arms by the authority of the king against his person, have attacked the writer while doing homage to the writings. Mr. Croker, for example, has published two thousand five hundred notes on the life of Johnson, and yet scarcely ever mentions the biographer whose performance he has taken such pains to illustrate without some expression of contempt.

7. An ill-natured man Boswell certainly was not. Yet the malignity of the most maligant satirist could scarcely cut deeper than his thoughtless loquacity. Having himself no sensibility to derision and contempt, he took it for granted that all others were equally callous. He was not ashamed to exhibit himself to the whole world as a common spy, a common tattler, a humble companion without the excuse of poverty, and to tell a hundred stories of his own pertness and folly, and of the insults which his pertness and folly brought upon him. It was natural that he should show little discretion in cases in which the feelings or the honour of others might be concerned. No man, surely, ever published such stories respecting persons whom he professed to love and revere. He would infallibly have made his hero as contemptible as he has made himself, had not his hero really possessed some moral and intellectual qualities of a very high order. The best proof that Johnson was really an extraordinary man is that his character, instead of being degraded, has, on the whole, been decidedly raised by a work in which all his vices and weaknesses are exposed more unsparingly than they ever were exposed by Churchill or by Kenrick.

8. Johnson grown old, Johnson in the fulness of his fame and in the enjoyment of a competent fortune, is better known to us than any other man in history. Every thing about him, his coat, his wig, his figure, his face, his scrofula, his St. Vitus's dance, his rolling walk, his blinking eye, the outward signs which too clearly marked his approbation of his dinner, his insatiable appetite for fish-sauce and veal-pie with plums, his

inextinguishable thirst for tea, his trick of touching the posts as he walked, his mysterious practice of treasuring up scraps of orange-peel, his morning slumbers, his midnight disputations, his contortions, his mutterings, his gruntings, his puffings, his vigorous, acute, and ready eloquence, his sarcastic wit, his vehemence, his insolence, his fits of tempestuous rage, his queer inmates, old Mr. Levett and blind Mrs. Williams, the cat Hodge and the negro Frank, all are as familiar to us as the objects by which we have been surrounded from childhood. But we have no minute information respecting those years of Johnson's life during which his character and his manners became immutably fixed. We know him, not as he was known to the men of his own generation, but as he was known to men whose father he might have been. That celebrated club of which he was the most distinguished member contained few persons who could remember a time when his fame was not fully established and his habits completely formed. He had made himself a name in literature while Reynolds and the Wartons were still boys. He was about twenty years older than Burke, Goldsmith, and Gerard Hamilton, about thirty years older than Gibbon, Beauclerk, and Langton, and about forty years older than Lord Stowell, Sir William Jones, and Windham. Boswell and Mrs. Thrale, the two writers from whom we derive most of our knowledge respecting him, never saw him till long after he was fifty years old, till most of his great works had become classical, and till the pension bestowed on him by the Crown had placed him above poverty. Of those eminent men who were his most intimate associates towards the close of his life, the only one, as far as we remember, who knew him during the first ten or twelve years of his residence in the capital, was David Garrick; and it does not appear that, during those years, David Garrick saw much of his fellow-townsman.

9. Johnson came up to London precisely at the time when the condition of a man of letters was most miserable and

degraded. It was a dark night between two sunny days. The age of patronage had passed away. The age of general curiosity and intelligence had not arrived. The number of readers is at present so great that a popular author may subsist in comfort and opulence on the profits of his works. In the reigns of William the Third, of Anne, and of George the First, even such men as Congreve and Addison would scarcely have been able to live like gentlemen by the mere sale of their writings. But the deficiency of the natural demand for literature was, at the close of the seventeenth and at the beginning of the eighteenth century, more than made up by artificial encouragement, by a vast system of bounties and premiums. There was, perhaps, never a time at which the rewards of literary merit were so splendid, at which men who could write well found such easy admittance into the most distinguished society, and to the highest honours of the state. The chiefs of both the great parties into which the kingdom was divided patronised literature with emulous munificence. Congreve, when he had scarcely attained his majority, was rewarded for his first comedy with places which made him independent for life. Smith, though his Hippolytus and Phædra failed, would have been consoled with three hundred a year but for his own folly. Rowe was not only Poet Laureate, but also land-surveyor of the customs in the port of London, clerk of the council to the Prince of Wales, and secretary of the Presentations to the Lord Chancellor. Hughes was secretary to the Commissions of the Peace. Ambrose Philips was judge of the Prerogative Court in Ireland. Locke was Commissioner of Appeals and of the Board of Trade. Newton was Master of the Mint. Stepney and Prior were employed in embassies of high dignity and importance. Gay, who commenced life as an apprentice to a silk mercer, became a secretary of legation at five-and-twenty. It was to a poem on the Death of Charles the Second, and to the City and Country Mouse, that Montague owed

his introduction into public life, his earldom, his garter, and his Auditorship of the Exchequer. Swift, but for the unconquerable prejudice of the queen, would have been a bishop. Oxford, with his white staff in his hand, passed through the crowd of his suitors to welcome Parnell, when that ingenious writer deserted the Whigs. Steele was a commissioner of stamps and a member of Parliament. Arthur Mainwaring was a commissioner of the customs, and auditor of the imprest. Tickell was secretary to the Lords Justices of Ireland. Addison was secretary of state.

10. This liberal patronage was brought into fashion, as it seems, by the magnificent Dorset, almost the only noble versifier in the court of Charles the Second who possessed talents for composition which were independent of the aid of a coronet. Montague owed his elevation to the favour of Dorset, and imitated through the whole course of his life the liberality to which he was himself so greatly indebted. The Tory leaders, Harley and Bolingbroke in particular, vied with the chiefs of the Whig party in zeal for the encouragement of letters. But soon after the accession of the House of Hanover a change took place. The supreme power passed to a man who cared little for poetry or eloquence. The importance of the House of Commons was constantly on the increase. The government was under the necessity of bartering for Parliamentary support much of that patronage which had been employed in fostering literary merit; and Walpole was by no means inclined to divert any part of the fund of corruption to purposes which he considered as idle. He had eminent talents for government and for debate. But he had paid little attention to books, and felt little respect for authors. One of the coarse jokes of his friend, Sir Charles Hanbury Williams, was far more pleasing to him than Thomson's Seasons or Richardson's Pamela. He had observed that some of the distinguished writers whom the favour of Halifax had turned into statesmen had

been mere encumbrances to their party, dawdlers in office, and mutes in Parliament. During the whole course of his administration, therefore, he scarcely befriended a single man of genius. The best writers of the age gave all their support to the opposition, and contributed to excite that discontent which, after plunging the nation into a foolish and unjust war, overthrew the minister to make room for men less able and equally immoral. The opposition could reward its eulogists with little more than promises and caresses. St. James's would give nothing: Leicester House had nothing to give.

11. Thus, at the time when Johnson commenced his literary career, a writer had little to hope from the patronage of powerful individuals. The patronage of the public did not yet furnish the means of comfortable subsistence. The prices paid by booksellers to authors were so low that a man of considerable talents and unremitting industry could do little more than provide for the day which was passing over him. The lean kine had eaten up the fat kine. The thin and withered ears had devoured the good ears. The season of rich harvests was over, and the period of famine had begun. All that is squalid and miserable might now be summed up in the word Poet. That word denoted a creature dressed like a scarecrow, familiar with compters and spunging-houses, and perfectly qualified to decide on the comparative merits of the Common Side in the King's Bench prison and of Mount Scoundrel in the Fleet. Even the poorest pitied him; and they well might pity him. For if their condition was equally abject, their aspirings were not equally high, nor their sense of insult equally acute. To lodge in a garret up four pair of stairs, to dine in a cellar among footmen out of place, to translate ten hours a day for the wages of a ditcher, to be hunted by bailiffs from one haunt of beggary and pestilence to another, from Grub Street to St. George's Fields, and from St. George's Fields to the alleys behind St. Martin's church, to sleep on a

bulk in June and amidst the ashes of a glass-house in December, to die in a hospital and to be buried in a parish vault, was the fate of more than one writer who, if he had lived thirty years earlier, would have been admitted to the sittings of the Kitcat or the Scriblerus club, would have sat in Parliament, and would have been intrusted with embassies to the High Allies; who, if he had lived in our time, would have found encouragement scarcely less munificent in Albemarle Street or in Paternoster Row.

12. As every climate has its peculiar diseases, so every walk of life has its peculiar temptations. The literary character, assuredly, has always had its share of faults, vanity, jealousy, morbid sensibility. To these faults were now superadded the faults which are commonly found in men whose livelihood is precarious, and whose principles are exposed to the trial of severe distress. All the vices of the gambler and of the beggar were blended with those of the author. The prizes in the wretched lottery of book-making were scarcely less ruinous than the blanks. If good fortune came, it came in such a manner that it was almost certain to be abused. After months of starvation and despair, a full third night or a well-received dedication filled the pocket of the lean, ragged, unwashed poet with guineas. He hastened to enjoy those luxuries with the images of which his mind had been haunted while he was sleeping amidst the cinders and eating potatoes at the Irish ordinary in Shoe Lane. A week of taverns soon qualified him for another year of night-cellars. Such was the life of Savage, of Boyse, and of a crowd of others. Sometimes blazing in gold-laced hats and waistcoats; sometimes lying in bed because their coats had gone to pieces, or wearing paper cravats because their linen was in pawn; sometimes drinking Champagne and Tokay with Betty Careless; sometimes standing at the window of an eating-house in Porridge island, to snuff up the scent of what they could not afford to taste:

they knew luxury; they knew beggary; but they never knew comfort. These men were irreclaimable. They looked on a regular and frugal life with the same aversion which an old gipsy or a Mohawk hunter feels for a stationary abode, and for the restraints and securities of civilised communities. They were as untameable, as much wedded to their desolate freedom, as the wild ass. They could no more be broken in to the offices of social man than the unicorn could be trained to serve and abide by the crib. It was well if they did not, like beasts of a still fiercer race, tear the hands which ministered to their necessities. To assist them was impossible; and the most benevolent of mankind at length became weary of giving relief which was dissipated with the wildest profusion as soon as it had been received. If a sum was bestowed on the wretched adventurer, such as, properly husbanded, might have supplied him for six months, it was instantly spent in strange freaks of sensuality, and before forty-eight hours had elapsed, the poet was again pestering all his acquaintance for twopence to get a plate of shin of beef at a subterraneous cook-shop. If his friends gave him an asylum in their houses, those houses were forthwith turned into bagnios and taverns. All order was destroyed; all business was suspended. The most good-natured host began to repent of his eagerness to serve a man of genius in distress when he heard his guest roaring for fresh punch at five o'clock in the morning.

13. A few eminent writers were more fortunate. Pope had been raised above poverty by the active patronage which, in his youth, both the great political parties had extended to his Homer. Young had received the only pension ever bestowed, to the best of our recollection, by Sir Robert Walpole, as the reward of mere literary merit. One or two of the many poets who attached themselves to the opposition, Thomson in particular and Mallet, obtained, after much severe suffering, the means of subsistence from their political friends. Richardson,

like a man of sense, kept his shop; and his shop kept him, which his novels, admirable as they are, would scarcely have done. But nothing could be more deplorable than the state even of the ablest men, who at that time depended for subsistence on their writings. Johnson, Collins, Fielding, and Thomson, were certainly four of the most distinguished persons that England produced during the eighteenth century. It is well known that they were all four arrested for debt.

14. Into calamities and difficulties such as these Johnson plunged in his twenty-eighth year. From that time till he was three or four and fifty, we have little information respecting him; little, we mean, compared with the full and accurate information which we possess respecting his proceedings and habits towards the close of his life. He emerged at length from cock-lofts and sixpenny ordinaries into the society of the polished and the opulent. His fame was established. A pension sufficient for his wants had been conferred on him: and he came forth to astonish a generation with which he had almost as little in common as with Frenchmen or Spaniards.

15. In his early years he had occasionally seen the great; but he had seen them as a beggar. He now came among them as a companion. The demand for amusement and instruction had, during the course of twenty years, been gradually increasing. The price of literary labour had risen; and those rising men of letters with whom Johnson was henceforth to associate were for the most part persons widely different from those who had walked about with him all night in the streets for want of a lodging. Burke, Robertson, the Wartons, Gray, Mason, Gibbon, Adam Smith, Beattie, Sir William Jones, Goldsmith, and Churchill, were the most distinguished writers of what may be called the second generation of the Johnsonian age. Of these men Churchill was the only one in whom we can trace the stronger lineaments of that character which, when Johnson first came up to London, was common

among authors. Of the rest, scarcely any had felt the pressure of severe poverty. Almost all had been early admitted into the most respectable society on an equal footing. They were men of quite a different species from the dependents of Curll and Osborne.

16. Johnson came among them the solitary specimen of a past age, the last survivor of the genuine race of Grub Street hacks; the last of that generation of authors whose abject misery and whose dissolute manners had furnished inexhaustible matter to the satirical genius of Pope. From nature he had received an uncouth figure, a diseased constitution, and an irritable temper. The manner in which the earlier years of his manhood had been passed had given to his demeanour, and even to his moral character, some peculiarities appalling to the civilised beings who were the companions of his old age. The perverse irregularity of his hours, the slovenliness of his person, his fits of strenuous exertion, interrupted by long intervals of sluggishness, his strange abstinence, and his equally strange voracity, his active benevolence, contrasted with the constant rudeness and the occasional ferocity of his manners in society, made him, in the opinion of those with whom he lived during the last twenty years of his life, a complete original. An original he was, undoubtedly, in some respects. But if we possessed full information concerning those who shared his early hardships, we should probably find that what we call his singularities of manner were, for the most part, failings which he had in common with the class to which he belonged. He ate at Streatham Park as he had been used to eat behind the screen at St. John's Gate, when he was ashamed to show his ragged clothes. He ate as it was natural that a man should eat, who, during a great part of his life, had passed the morning in doubt whether he should have food for the afternoon. The habits of his early life had accustomed him to bear privation

with fortitude, but not to taste pleasure with moderation. He could fast; but, when he did not fast, he tore his dinner like a famished wolf, with the veins swelling on his forehead, and the perspiration running down his cheeks. He scarcely ever took wine. But when he drank it, he drank it greedily and in large tumblers. These were, in fact, mitigated symptoms of that same moral disease which raged with such deadly malignity in his friends Savage and Boyse. The roughness and violence which he showed in society were to be expected from a man whose temper, not naturally gentle, had been long tried by the bitterest calamities, by the want of meat, of fire, and of clothes, by the importunity of creditors, by the insolence of booksellers, by the derision of fools, by the insincerity of patrons, by that bread which is the bitterest of all food, by those stairs which are the most toilsome of all paths, by that deferred hope which makes the heart sick. Through all these things the ill-dressed, coarse, ungainly pedant had struggled manfully up to eminence and command. It was natural that, in the exercise of his power, he should be "eo immitior, quia toleraverat," that, though his heart was undoubtedly generous and humane, his demeanour in society should be harsh and despotic. For severe distress he had sympathy, and not only sympathy, but munificent relief. But for the suffering which a harsh world inflicts upon a delicate mind he had no pity; for it was a kind of suffering which he could scarcely conceive. He would carry home on his shoulders a sick and starving girl from the streets. He turned his house into a place of refuge for a crowd of wretched old creatures who could find no other asylum; nor could all their peevishness and ingratitude weary out his benevolence. But the pangs of wounded vanity seemed to him ridiculous; and he scarcely felt sufficient compassion even for the pangs of wounded affection. He had seen and felt so much of sharp misery, that he was not

affected by paltry vexations; and he seemed to think that every body ought to be as much hardened to those vexations as himself. He was angry with Boswell for complaining of a headache, with Mrs. Thrale for grumbling about the dust on the road, or the smell of the kitchen. These were, in his phrase, "foppish lamentations," which people ought to be ashamed to utter in a world so full of sin and sorrow. Goldsmith crying because the Good-natured Man had failed, inspired him with no pity. Though his own health was not good, he detested and despised valetudinarians. Pecuniary losses, unless they reduced the loser absolutely to beggary, moved him very little. People whose hearts had been softened by prosperity might weep, he said, for such events; but all that could be expected of a plain man was not to laugh. He was not much moved even by the spectacle of Lady Tavistock dying of a broken heart for the loss of her lord. Such grief he considered as a luxury reserved for the idle and the wealthy. A washerwoman, left a widow with nine small children, would not have sobbed herself to death.

17. A person who troubled himself so little about small or sentimental grievances was not likely to be very attentive to the feelings of others in the ordinary intercourse of society. He could not understand how a sarcasm or a reprimand could make any man really unhappy. "My dear doctor," said he to Goldsmith, "what harm does it do to a man to call him Holofernes?" "Pooh, ma'am," he exclaimed to Mrs. Carter, "who is the worse for being talked of uncharitably?" Politeness has been well defined as benevolence in small things. Johnson was impolite, not because he wanted benevolence, but because small things appeared smaller to him than to people who had never known what it was to live for fourpence halfpenny a day.

18. The characteristic peculiarity of his intellect was the union of great powers with low prejudices. If we judged of

him by the best parts of his mind, we should place him almost as high as he was placed by the idolatry of Boswell; if by the worst parts of his mind, we should place him even below Boswell himself. Where he was not under the influence of some strange scruple, or some domineering passion, which prevented him from boldly and fairly investigating a subject, he was a wary and acute reasoner, a little too much inclined to scepticism, and a little too fond of paradox. No man was less likely to be imposed upon by fallacies in argument or by exaggerated statements of fact. But if, while he was beating down sophisms and exposing false testimony, some childish prejudices, such as would excite laughter in a well-managed nursery, came across him, he was smitten as if by enchantment. His mind dwindled away under the spell from gigantic elevation to dwarfish littleness. Those who had lately been admiring its amplitude and its force were now as much astonished at its strange narrowness and feebleness as the fisherman in the Arabian tale, when he saw the Genie, whose stature had overshadowed the whole sea-coast, and whose might seemed equal to a contest with armies, contract himself to the dimensions of his small prison, and lie there the helpless slave of the charm of Solomon.

19. Johnson was in the habit of sifting with extreme severity the evidence for all stories which were merely odd. But when they were not only odd but miraculous, his severity relaxed. He began to be credulous precisely at the point where the most credulous people begin to be sceptical. It is curious to observe, both in his writings and in his conversation, the contrast between the disdainful manner in which he rejects unauthenticated anecdotes, even when they are consistent with the general laws of nature, and the respectful manner in which he mentions the wildest stories relating to the invisible world. A man who told him of a waterspout or a meteoric stone generally had the lie direct given him for his pains. A man

who told him of a prediction or a dream wonderfully accomplished was sure of a courteous hearing. "Johnson," observed Hogarth, "like king David, says in his haste that all men are liars." "His incredulity," says Mrs. Thrale, "amounted almost to disease." She tells us how he browbeat a gentleman, who gave him an account of a hurricane in the West Indies, and a poor quaker who related some strange circumstance about the red-hot balls fired at the siege of Gibraltar. "It is not so. It cannot be true. Don't tell that story again. You cannot think how poor a figure you make in telling it." He once said, half jestingly we suppose, that for six months he refused to credit the fact of the earthquake at Lisbon, and that he still believed the extent of the calamity to be greatly exaggerated. Yet he related with a grave face how old Mr. Cave of St. John's Gate saw a ghost, and how this ghost was something of a shadowy being. He went himself on a ghost hunt to Cock Lane, and was angry with John Wesley for not following up another scent of the same kind with proper spirit and perseverance. He rejects the Celtic genealogies and poems without the least hesitation; yet he declares himself willing to believe the stories of the second sight. If he had examined the claims of the Highland seers with half the severity with which he sifted the evidence for the genuineness of Fingal, he would, we suspect, have come away from Scotland with a mind fully made up. In his Lives of the Poets, we find that he is unwilling to give credit to the accounts of Lord Roscommon's early proficiency in his studies; but he tells with great solemnity an absurd romance about some intelligence preternaturally impressed on the mind of that nobleman. He avows himself to be in great doubt about the truth of the story, and ends by warning his readers not wholly to slight such impressions.

20. Many of his sentiments on religious subjects are worthy of a liberal and enlarged mind. He could discern clearly enough the folly and meanness of all bigotry except his own.

When he spoke of the scruples of the Puritans, he spoke like a person who had really obtained an insight into the divine philosophy of the New Testament, and who considered Christianity as a noble scheme of government, tending to promote the happiness and to elevate the moral nature of man. The horror which the sectaries felt for cards, Christmas ale, plum-porridge, mince-pies, and dancing-bears, excited his contempt. To the arguments urged by some very worthy people against showy dress he replied with admirable sense and spirit, "Let us not be found, when our Master calls us, stripping the lace off our waistcoats, but the spirit of contention from our souls and tongues. Alas! sir, the man who cannot get to heaven in a green coat will not find his way thither the sooner in a grey one." Yet he was himself under the tyranny of scruples as unreasonable as those of Hudibras or Ralpho, and carried his zeal for ceremonies and for ecclesiastical dignities to lengths altogether inconsistent with reason or with Christian charity. He has gravely noted down in his diary that he once committed the sin of drinking coffee on Good Friday. In Scotland, he thought it his duty to pass several months without joining in public worship, solely because the ministers of the kirk had not been ordained by bishops. His mode of estimating the piety of his neighbours was somewhat singular. "Campbell," said he, "is a good man, a pious man. I am afraid he has not been in the inside of a church for many years; but he never passes a church without pulling off his hat: this shows he has good principles." Spain and Sicily must surely contain many pious robbers and well-principled assassins. Johnson could easily see that a Roundhead who named all his children after Solomon's singers, and talked in the House of Commons about seeking the Lord, might be an unprincipled villain whose religious mummeries only aggravated his guilt. But a man who took off his hat when he passed a church episcopally consecrated must be a good man, a pious man, a man of good principles.

Johnson could easily see that those persons who looked on a dance or a laced waistcoat as sinful, deemed most ignobly of the attributes of God and of the ends of revelation. But with what a storm of invective he would have overwhelmed any man who had blamed him for celebrating the redemption of mankind with sugarless tea and butterless buns.

21. Nobody spoke more contemptuously of the cant of patriotism. Nobody saw more clearly the error of those who regarded liberty, not as a means, but as an end, and who proposed to themselves, as the object of their pursuit, the prosperity of the state as distinct from the prosperity of the individuals who compose the state. His calm and settled opinion seems to have been that forms of government have little or no influence on the happiness of society. This opinion, erroneous as it is, ought at least to have preserved him from all intemperance on political questions. It did not, however, preserve him from the lowest, fiercest, and most absurd extravagances of party-spirit, from rants which, in every thing but the diction, resembled those of Squire Western. He was, as a politician, half ice and half fire. On the side of his intellect he was a mere Pococurante, far too apathetic about public affairs, far too sceptical as to the good or evil tendency of any form of polity. His passions, on the contrary, were violent even to slaying against all who leaned to Whiggish principles. The well-known lines which he inserted in Goldsmith's Traveller express what seems to have been his deliberate judgment:

> "How small of all that human hearts endure
> That part which kings or laws can cause or cure!"

He had previously put expressions very similar into the mouth of Rasselas. It is amusing to contrast these passages with the torrents of raving abuse which he poured forth against the Long Parliament and the American Congress. In one of the conversations reported by Boswell this inconsistency displays itself in the most ludicrous manner.

22. "Sir Adam Ferguson," says Boswell, "suggested that luxury corrupts a people, and destroys the spirit of liberty. JOHNSON: 'Sir, that is all visionary. I would not give half a guinea to live under one form of government rather than another. It is of no moment to the happiness of an individual. Sir, the danger of the abuse of power is nothing to a private man. What Frenchman is prevented passing his life as he pleases?' SIR ADAM: 'But, sir, in the British constitution it is surely of importance to keep up a spirit in the people, so as to preserve a balance against the crown.' JOHNSON: 'Sir, I perceive you are a vile Whig. Why all this childish jealousy of the power of the crown? The crown has not power enough.'"

23. One of the old philosophers, Lord Bacon tells us, used to say that life and death were just the same to him. "Why, then," said an objector, "do you not kill yourself?" The philosopher answered, "Because it is just the same." If the difference between two forms of government be not worth half a guinea, it is not easy to see how Whiggism can be viler than Toryism, or how the crown can have too little power. If the happiness of individuals is not affected by political abuses, zeal for liberty is doubtless ridiculous. But zeal for monarchy must be equally so. No person would have been more quick-sighted than Johnson to such a contradiction as this in the logic of an antagonist.

24. The judgments which Johnson passed on books were, in his own time, regarded with superstitious veneration, and, in our time, are generally treated with indiscriminate contempt. They are the judgments of a strong but enslaved understanding. The mind of the critic was hedged round by an uninterrupted fence of prejudices and superstitions. Within his narrow limits, he displayed a vigour and an activity which ought to have enabled him to clear the barrier that confined him.

25. How it chanced that a man who reasoned on his premises so ably, should assume his premises so foolishly, is one of

the great mysteries of human nature. The same inconsistency may be observed in the schoolmen of the middle ages. Those writers show so much acuteness and force of mind in arguing on their wretched data, that a modern reader is perpetually at a loss to comprehend how such minds came by such data. Not a flaw in the superstructure of the theory which they are rearing escapes their vigilance. Yet they are blind to the obvious unsoundness of the foundation. It is the same with some eminent lawyers. Their legal arguments are intellectual prodigies, abounding with the happiest analogies and the most refined distinctions. The principles of their arbitrary science being once admitted, the statute-book and the reports being once assumed as the foundations of reasoning, these men must be allowed to be perfect masters of logic. But if a question arises as to the postulates on which their whole system rests, if they are called upon to vindicate the fundamental maxims of that system which they have passed their lives in studying, these very men often talk the language of savages or of children. Those who have listened to a man of this class in his own court, and who have witnessed the skill with which he analyses and digests a vast mass of evidence, or reconciles a crowd of precedents which at first sight seem contradictory, scarcely know him again when, a few hours later, they hear him speaking on the other side of Westminster Hall in his capacity of legislator. They can scarcely believe that the paltry quirks which are faintly heard through a storm of coughing, and which do not impose on the plainest country gentleman, can proceed from the same sharp and vigorous intellect which had excited their admiration under the same roof, and on the same day.

26. Johnson decided literary questions like a lawyer, not like a legislator. He never examined foundations where a point was already ruled. His whole code of criticism rested on pure assumption, for which he sometimes quoted a precedent

or an authority, but rarely troubled himself to give a reason drawn from the nature of things. He took it for granted that the kind of poetry which flourished in his own time, which he had been accustomed to hear praised from his childhood, and which he had himself written with success, was the best kind of poetry. In his biographical work he has repeatedly laid it down as an undeniable proposition that during the latter part of the seventeenth century, and the earlier part of the eighteenth, English poetry had been in a constant progress of improvement. Waller, Denham, Dryden, and Pope, had been, according to him, the great reformers. He judged of all works of the imagination by the standard established among his own contemporaries. Though he allowed Homer to have been a greater man than Virgil, he seems to have thought the Æneid a greater poem than the Iliad. Indeed he well might have thought so; for he preferred Pope's Iliad to Homer's. He pronounced that, after Hoole's translation of Tasso, Fairfax's would hardly be reprinted. He could see no merit in our fine old English ballads, and always spoke with the most provoking contempt of Percy's fondness for them. Of the great original works of imagination which appeared during his time, Richardson's novels alone excited his admiration. He could see little or no merit in Tom Jones, in Gulliver's Travels, or in Tristram Shandy. To Thomson's Castle of Indolence, he vouchsafed only a line of cold commendation, of commendation much colder than what he has bestowed on the Creation of that portentous bore, Sir Richard Blackmore. Gray was, in his dialect, a barren rascal. Churchill was a blockhead. The contempt which he felt for the trash of Macpherson was indeed just; but it was, we suspect, just by chance. He despised the Fingal for the very reason which led many men of genius to admire it. He despised it, not because it was essentially commonplace, but because it had a superficial air of originality.

27. He was undoubtedly an excellent judge of compositions fashioned on his own principles. But when a deeper philosophy was required, when he undertook to pronounce judgment on the works of those great minds which "yield homage only to eternal laws," his failure was ignominious. He criticised Pope's Epitaphs excellently. But his observations on Shakespeare's plays and Milton's poems seem to us for the most part as wretched as if they had been written by Rymer himself, whom we take to have been the worst critic that ever lived.

28. Some of Johnson's whims on literary subjects can be compared only to that strange nervous feeling which made him uneasy if he had not touched every post between the Mitre tavern and his own lodgings. His preference of Latin epitaphs to English epitaphs is an instance. An English epitaph, he said, would disgrace Smollett. He declared that he would not pollute the walls of Westminster Abbey with an English epitaph on Goldsmith. What reason there can be for celebrating a British writer in Latin, which there was not for covering the Roman arches of triumph with Greek inscriptions, or for commemorating the deeds of the heroes of Thermopylæ in Egyptian hieroglyphics, we are utterly unable to imagine.

29. On men and manners, at least on the men and manners of a particular place and a particular age, Johnson had certainly looked with a most observant and discriminating eye. His remarks on the education of children, on marriage, on the economy of families, on the rules of society, are always striking, and generally sound. In his writings, indeed, the knowledge of life which he possessed in an eminent degree is very imperfectly exhibited. Like those unfortunate chiefs of the middle ages who were suffocated by their own chain-mail and cloth of gold, his maxims perish under that load of words which was designed for their defence and their ornament. But it is clear from the remains of his conversation, that he

had more of that homely wisdom which nothing but experience and observation can give than any writer since the time of Swift. If he had been content to write as he talked, he might have left books on the practical art of living superior to the Directions to Servants.

30. Yet even his remarks on society, like his remarks on literature, indicate a mind at least as remarkable for narrowness as for strength. He was no master of the great science of human nature. He had studied, not the genus man, but the species Londoner. Nobody was ever so thoroughly conversant with all the forms of life and all the shades of moral and intellectual character which were to be seen from Islington to the Thames, and from Hyde-Park corner to Mile-end green. But his philosophy stopped at the first turnpike-gate. Of the rural life of England he knew nothing; and he took it for granted that every body who lived in the country was either stupid or miserable. "Country gentlemen," said he, "must be unhappy; for they have not enough to keep their lives in motion"; as if all those peculiar habits and associations which made Fleet Street and Charing Cross the finest views in the world to himself had been essential parts of human nature. Of remote countries and past times he talked with wild and ignorant presumption. "The Athenians of the age of Demosthenes," he said to Mrs. Thrale, "were a people of brutes, a barbarous people." In conversation with Sir Adam Ferguson he used similar language. "The boasted Athenians," he said, "were barbarians. The mass of every people must be barbarous where there is no printing." The fact was this: he saw that a Londoner who could not read was a very stupid and brutal fellow: he saw that great refinement of taste and activity of intellect were rarely found in a Londoner who had not read much; and, because it was by means of books that people acquired almost all their knowledge in the society with which he was acquainted, he concluded, in defiance of the strongest

and clearest evidence, that the human mind can be cultivated by means of books alone. An Athenian citizen might possess very few volumes; and the largest library to which he had access might be much less valuable than Johnson's bookcase in Bolt Court. But the Athenian might pass every morning in conversation with Socrates, and might hear Pericles speak four or five times every month. He saw the plays of Sophocles and Aristophanes: he walked amidst the friezes of Phidias and the paintings of Zeuxis: he knew by heart the choruses of Æschylus: he heard the rhapsodist at the corner of the street reciting the Shield of Achilles or the Death of Argus: he was a legislator, conversant with high questions of alliance, revenue, and war: he was a soldier, trained under a liberal and generous discipline: he was a judge, compelled every day to weigh the effect of opposite arguments. These things were in themselves an education, an education eminently fitted, not, indeed, to form exact or profound thinkers, but to give quickness to the perceptions, delicacy to the taste, fluency to the expression, and politeness to the manners. All this was overlooked. An Athenian who did not improve his mind by reading was, in Johnson's opinion, much such a person as a Cockney who made his mark, much such a person as black Frank before he went to school, and far inferior to a parish clerk or a printer's devil.

31. Johnson's friends have allowed that he carried to a ridiculous extreme his unjust contempt for foreigners. He pronounced the French to be a very silly people, much behind us, stupid, ignorant creatures. And this judgment he formed after having been at Paris about a month, during which he would not talk French, for fear of giving the natives an advantage over him in conversation. He pronounced them, also, to be an indelicate people, because a French footman touched the sugar with his fingers. That ingenious and amusing traveller, M. Simond, has defended his countrymen

very successfully against Johnson's accusation, and has pointed out some English practices which, to an impartial spectator, would seem at least as inconsistent with physical cleanliness and social decorum as those which Johnson so bitterly reprehended. To the sage, as Boswell loves to call him, it never occurred to doubt that there must be something eternally and immutably good in the usages to which he had been accustomed. In fact, Johnson's remarks on society beyond the bills of mortality, are generally of much the same kind with those of honest Tom Dawson, the English footman in Dr. Moore's Zeluco. "Suppose the king of France has no sons, but only a daughter, then, when the king dies, this here daughter, according to that there law, cannot be made queen, but the next near relative, provided he is a man, is made king, and not the last king's daughter, which, to be sure, is very unjust. The French foot-guards are dressed in blue, and all the marching regiments in white, which has a very foolish appearance for soldiers; and as for blue regimentals, it is only fit for the blue horse or the artillery."

32. Johnson's visit to the Hebrides introduced him to a state of society completely new to him; and a salutary suspicion of his own deficiencies seems on that occasion to have crossed his mind for the first time. He confessed, in the last paragraph of his Journey, that his thoughts on national manners were the thoughts of one who had seen but little, of one who had passed his time almost wholly in cities. This feeling, however, soon passed away. It is remarkable that to the last he entertained a fixed contempt for all those modes of life and those studies which tend to emancipate the mind from the prejudices of a particular age or a particular nation. Of foreign travel and of history he spoke with the fierce and boisterous contempt of ignorance. "What does a man learn by travelling? Is Beauclerk the better for travelling? What did Lord Charlemont learn in his travels, except that there

was a snake in one of the pyramids of Egypt?" History was, in his opinion, to use the fine expression of Lord Plunkett, an old almanack: historians could, as he conceived, claim no higher dignity than that of almanack-makers; and his favourite historians were those who, like Lord Hailes, aspired to no higher dignity. He always spoke with contempt of Robertson. Hume he would not even read. He affronted one of his friends for talking to him about Catiline's conspiracy, and declared that he never desired to hear of the Punic war again as long as he lived.

33. Assuredly one fact which does not directly affect our own interests, considered in itself, is no better worth knowing than another fact. The fact that there is a snake in a pyramid, or the fact that Hannibal crossed the Alps, are in themselves as unprofitable to us as the fact that there is a green blind in a particular house in Threadneedle Street, or the fact that a Mr. Smith comes into the city every morning on the top of one of the Blackwall stages. But it is certain that those who will not crack the shell of history will never get at the kernel. Johnson, with hasty arrogance, pronounced the kernel worthless, because he saw no value in the shell. The real use of travelling to distant countries and of studying the annals of past times is to preserve men from the contraction of mind which those can hardly escape whose whole communion is with one generation and one neighbourhood, who arrive at conclusions by means of an induction not sufficiently copious, and who therefore constantly confound exceptions with rules, and accidents with essential properties. In short, the real use of travelling and of studying history is to keep men from being what Tom Dawson was in fiction, and Samuel Johnson in reality.

34. Johnson, as Mr. Burke most justly observed, appears far greater in Boswell's books than in his own. His conversation appears to have been quite equal to his writings in

matter, and far superior to them in manner. When he talked, he clothed his wit and his sense in forcible and natural expressions. As soon as he took his pen in his hand to write for the public, his style became systematically vicious. All his books are written in a learned language, in a language which nobody hears from his mother or his nurse, in a language in which nobody ever quarrels, or drives bargains, or makes love, in a language in which nobody ever thinks. It is clear that Johnson himself did not think in the dialect in which he wrote. The expressions which came first to his tongue were simple, energetic, and picturesque. When he wrote for publication he did his sentences out of English into Johnsonese. His letters from the Hebrides to Mrs. Thrale are the original of that work of which the Journey to the Hebrides is the translation; and it is amusing to compare the two versions. "When we were taken up stairs," says he in one of his letters, "a dirty fellow bounced out of the bed on which one of us was to lie." This incident is recorded in the Journey as follows: "Out of one of the beds on which we were to repose started up, at our entrance, a man black as a Cyclops from the forge." Sometimes Johnson translated aloud. "The Rehearsal," he said, very unjustly, "has not wit enough to keep it sweet"; then, after a pause, "it has not vitality enough to preserve it from putrefaction."

35. Mannerism is pardonable, and is sometimes even agreeable, when the manner, though vicious, is natural. Few readers, for example, would be willing to part with the mannerism of Milton or of Burke. But a mannerism which does not sit easy on the mannerist, which has been adopted on principle, and which can be sustained only by constant effort, is always offensive. And such is the mannerism of Johnson.

36. The characteristic faults of his style are so familiar to all our readers, and have been so often burlesqued, that it is almost superfluous to point them out. It is well known

that he made less use than any other eminent writer of those strong plain words, Anglo-Saxon or Norman-French, of which the roots lie in the inmost depths of our language; and that he felt a vicious partiality for terms which, long after our own speech had been fixed, were borrowed from the Greek and Latin, and which therefore, even when lawfully naturalised, must be considered as born aliens, not entitled to rank with the king's English. His constant practice of padding out a sentence with useless epithets, till it became as stiff as the bust of an exquisite, his antithetical forms of expression, constantly employed even where there is no opposition in the ideas expressed, his big words wasted on little things, his harsh inversions, so widely different from those graceful and easy inversions which give variety, spirit, and sweetness to the expression of our great old writers, all these peculiarities have been imitated by his admirers and parodied by his assailants, till the public has become sick of the subject.

37. Goldsmith said to him, very wittily and very justly, "If you were to write a fable about little fishes, doctor, you would make the little fishes talk like whales." No man surely ever had so little talent for personation as Johnson. Whether he wrote in the character of a disappointed legacy-hunter or an empty town fop, of a crazy virtuoso or a flippant coquette, he wrote in the same pompous and unbending style. His speech, like Sir Piercy Shafton's Euphuistic eloquence, bewrayed him under every disguise. Euphelia and Rhodoclea talk as finely as Imlac the poet, or Seged, Emperor of Ethiopia. The gay Cornelia describes her reception at the country-house of her relations in such terms as these: "I was surprised, after the civilities of my first reception, to find, instead of the leisure and tranquillity which a rural life always promises, and, if well conducted, might always afford, a confused wildness of care, and a tumultuous hurry of diligence, by which every face was clouded, and every motion agitated." The gentle

Tranquilla informs us, that she "had not passed the earlier part of life without the flattery of courtship, and the joys of triumph; but had danced the round of gaiety amidst the murmurs of envy and the gratulations of applause, had been attended from pleasure to pleasure by the great, the sprightly, and the vain, and had seen her regard solicited by the obsequiousness of gallantry, the gaiety of wit, and the timidity of love." Surely Sir John Falstaff himself did not wear his petticoats with a worse grace. The reader may well cry out, with honest Sir Hugh Evans, "I like not when a 'oman has a great peard: I spy a great peard under her muffler." [1]

38. We had something more to say. But our article is already too long; and we must close it. We would fain part in good humour from the hero, from the biographer, and even from the editor, who, ill as he has performed his task, has at least this claim to our gratitude, that he has induced us to read Boswell's book again. As we close it, the club-room is before us, and the table on which stands the omelet for Nugent, and the lemons for Johnson. There are assembled those heads which live for ever on the canvass of Reynolds. There are the spectacles of Burke and the tall thin form of Langton, the courtly sneer of Beauclerk, and the beaming smile of Garrick, Gibbon tapping his snuff-box, and Sir Joshua with his trumpet in his ear. In the foreground is that strange figure which is as familiar to us as the figures of those among whom we have been brought up, the gigantic body, the huge massy face, seamed with the scars of disease, the brown coat, the black worsted stockings, the grey wig with the scorched foretop, the dirty hands, the nails bitten and pared to the quick. We see the eyes and mouth moving with convulsive twitches: we see the heavy form rolling; we

[1] It is proper to observe that this passage bears a very close resemblance to a passage in the Rambler (No. 20). The resemblance may possibly be the effect of unconscious plagiarism. — *Macaulay.*

hear it puffing; and then comes the "Why, sir!" and the "What then, sir?" and the "No, sir!" and the "You don't see your way through the question, sir!"

39. What a singular destiny has been that of this remarkable man! To be regarded in his own age as a classic, and in ours as a companion. To receive from his contemporaries that full homage which men of genius have in general received only from posterity! To be more intimately known to posterity than other men are known to their contemporaries! That kind of fame which is commonly the most transient is, in his case, the most durable. The reputation of those writings, which he probably expected to be immortal, is every day fading; while those peculiarities of manner and that careless table-talk, the memory of which, he probably thought, would die with him, are likely to be remembered as long as the English language is spoken in any quarter of the globe.

NOTES

PAGE 1. LINE 4. **Lichfield.** Observe how near Lichfield comes to being in the exact center of England.

1 4–5. **the midland counties.** As you run your eye over the map, what counties should you naturally include under this head? In what county is Lichfield?

1 9. **oracle.** "Johnson, the Lichfield librarian, is now here; he propagates learning all over this diocese, and advanceth knowledge to its just height; all the clergy here are his pupils, and suck all they have from him." — From a letter written by Rev. George Plaxton, quoted by Boswell.

1 10–11. **a strong religious and political sympathy.** Macaulay's use of the article would lead us to think that the two kinds of sympathy were very closely connected. Michael Johnson was a member of the Established Church of England, and at heart a believer in the "divine right" kings. The student who is not familiar with the history of this period will do well to look up *Jacobite* in Brewer's *Historic Note-book* and then to read in some brief history an account of the *sovereigns in possession* who followed James II, — William and Mary (1689–1702) and Anne (1702–1714). Boswell says, "He no doubt had an early attachment to the House of Stuart; but his zeal had cooled as his reason strengthened."

1 16. **In the child.** Pause to take the glimpse ahead which this sentence gives. The construction helps one to remember the three kinds of peculiarities and the order in which they are mentioned.

2 26. **Augustan delicacy of taste.** You may read in Harper's *Dictionary of Classical Literature and Antiquities*, in the article on Augustus Cæsar, how "the court of Augustus thus became a school of culture, where men of genius acquired that delicacy of taste, elevation of sentiment, and purity of expression which characterize the writers of the age."

2 32. **Petrarch.** Does Macaulay imply that Petrarch is one of "the great restorers of learning"? See *Renaissance* in *The Century Dictionary* and Harper's *Dictionary of Classical Literature and Antiquities*.

Note that Petrarch "may be said to have rediscovered Greek, which for some six centuries had been lost to the western world." Keep in mind, too, that his friend and disciple, Boccaccio, translated Homer into Latin.

3 11. **Pembroke College.** The University of Oxford consists of twenty-one colleges which together form a corporate body. The colleges are "endowed by their founders and others with estates and benefices; out of the revenue arising from the estates, as well as other resources, the Heads and Senior and Junior Members *on the foundation* receive an income, and the expenses of the colleges are defrayed. Members *not on the foundation*, called 'independent members,' reside entirely at their own expense." Among the members *on the foundation* are the Heads, Fellows, and Scholars.

3 17–18. **Macrobius.** A Roman grammarian who probably lived at the beginning of the fifth century.

3 20. **about three years.** Apparently Johnson remained at Oxford only fourteen months. See Dr. Hill's *Dr. Johnson, His Friends and His Critics*.

4 1–2. "It was bitterness which they mistook for frolic. I was miserably poor, and I thought to fight my way by my literature and my wit; so I disregarded all power and all authority." — Johnson, quoted by Boswell. Although aware of what he considered the defects of his college, Johnson loved Pembroke as long as he lived. He delighted in boasting of its eminent graduates and would have left to it his house at Lichfield had not wiser friends induced him to bequeath it to some poor relatives.

4 15–16. **his father died.** "I now therefore see that I must make my own fortune. Meanwhile let me take care that the powers of my mind be not debilitated by poverty, and that indigence do not force me into any criminal act." — Johnson, quoted by Boswell.

5 32. **Walmesley.** "I am not able to name a man of equal knowledge. His acquaintance with books was great, and what he did not immediately know, he could, at least, tell where to find." — Johnson, quoted by Boswell.

6 13. **Politian.** Another of "the great restorers of learning" (see 2 31). His beginning of a translation of the *Iliad* into Latin attracted the attention of Lorenzo de' Medici, under whose patronage he became one of the first scholars of Italy.

6 17. **fell in love.** Boswell says that Johnson's early attachments to the fair sex were "very transient," and considers it but natural that when the passion of love once seized him it should be exceedingly strong, concentrated as it was in one object.

6 22. **Queensberrys and Lepels.** Families of high rank in England.

7 3–4. **half ludicrous.** Carlyle says it is no matter for ridicule that the man "whose look all men both laughed at and shuddered at, should find any brave female heart, to acknowledge, at first sight and hearing of him, 'This is the most sensible man I ever met with'; and then, with generous courage, to take him to itself, and say Be thou mine! . . . Johnson's deathless affection for his Tetty was always venerable and noble."

7 6–7. At Edial. Although this enterprise did not prosper, the man, as Carlyle says, "was to become a Teacher of grown gentlemen, in the most surprising way; a man of Letters, and Ruler of the British Nation for some time, — not of their bodies merely, but of their minds; not *over* them, but *in* them."

7 13. **David Garrick.** The mere fact that this celebrated actor and successful manager brought out twenty-four of Shakspere's plays is reason enough why we should look him up. A slight knowledge of his career enables one to enjoy all the more the frequent references to him in Boswell's *Life of Johnson*. After reading the sketch in the *Encyclopædia Britannica* it would be a good plan to read Boswell's references consecutively by means of the index.

8 9. **Fielding.** For an enjoyable short sketch of the first great English novelist, see Thackeray's *English Humourists*.

8 10. **The Beggar's Opera,** by John Gay, appeared in 1728.

8 19. **knot.** See *The Century Dictionary*.

8 34. **Drury Lane.** A street in the heart of the city, near the Strand, — one of the chief thoroughfares. It was beginning to lose its old-time respectability.

9 9. **the sight of food.** Once when Boswell was giving a dinner and one of the company was late, Boswell proposed to order dinner to be served, adding, "'Ought six people to be kept waiting for one?' 'Why, yes,' answered Johnson, with a delicate humanity, 'if the one will suffer more by your sitting down than the six will do by waiting.'" Is it probable that Macaulay exaggerates?

9 27. **Harleian Library.** The library collected by Robert Harley, First Earl of Oxford. Osborne afterwards bought it and Johnson did some of the cataloguing for him. As to Osborne's punishment, Boswell says: "The simple truth I had from Johnson himself. 'Sir, he was impertinent to me, and I beat him. But it was not in his shop: it was in my own chamber.'"

10 6. **Blefuscu, Mildendo.** If Blefuscu and Mildendo look unfamiliar, go to Lilliput for them. (See *Gulliver's Travels*.)

10 9. "Johnson told me, that as soon as he found that the speeches were thought genuine, he determined that he would write no more of them; for he 'would not be accessory to the propagation of falsehood.'" — Boswell.

10 15. Cf. *The Traveller*. Do you suppose that either Johnson or Goldsmith really believed that one form of government is as good as another?

10 17. **Montagues.** See Shakspere's *Romeo and Juliet*.

10 18. **Greens.** In Roman chariot races there was the bitterest rivalry between the different colors of the factions, and the betting often led to scenes of riot and bloodshed. Once in Justinian's reign, in the great circus at Constantinople, the tumult was not suppressed till about thirty thousand of the rioters had been killed. See Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, Chapter XL.

10 22. **Sacheverell.** What do you gather from the context about this preacher? Was he high church? Did he preach resistance to the king?

10 31. **Tom Tempest.** See Johnson's *Idler*, No. 10.

10 32. **Laud.** Read in Gardiner's *Student's History of England* the account of this archbishop who tried to enforce uniformity of worship.

11 2–4. **Hampden, Falkland, Clarendon.** In the case of these three statesmen, as well as in the case of Laud, the context shows which of them were supporters of Charles I and which resisted him. Does Macaulay imply that Johnson would have been excusable if he had sympathized with Hampden's refusal to pay "ship money"?

11 5. **Roundheads.** If you do not know why they were so called, see *The Century Dictionary*.

11 20–21. **Great Rebellion.** If in doubt as to which rebellion Macaulay refers, see *The Century Dictionary* or Brewer's *Dictionary of Phrase and Fable*.

12 2, 8, 10. **Juvenal.** Dryden has translated five of the poems of this great Roman satirist. It is worth while to compare Johnson's *London*, a free imitation of the Third Satire, with Dryden's version. Johnson's poem may be found in Hales's *Longer English Poems*.

12 19. Boswell, too, asks us to remember Pope's candor and liberal conduct on this occasion. Let us not forget it.

13 8. **Psalmanazar.** Pretending to be a Japanese, this Frenchman wrote what he called a *History of Formosa:* Although fabulous, it deceived the learned world.

13 14–15. **blue ribands.** Worn by members of the Order of the Garter.

13 16. **Newgate.** The notorious London prison.

13 26. **Piazza** here has its first meaning, — "an open square in a town surrounded by buildings or colonnades, a plaza." This space was once the "convent" garden of the monks of Westminster. For a brief sketch of it down to the time its "coffee houses and taverns became the fashionable lounging-places for the authors, wits, and noted men of the kingdom," see *The Century Dictionary*.

14 11-12. **Grub Street.** "Originally the name of a street in Moorfields in London, much inhabited by writers of small histories, dictionaries, and temporary poems; whence any mean production is called *grubstreet*.

> 'I'd sooner ballads write, and *grubstreet* lays.' Gay."
>
> — Johnson's *Dictionary*, edition of 1773.

14 23. **Warburton.** Bishop Warburton thus praised Johnson in the Preface to his own edition of *Shakspere*, and Johnson showed his appreciation by saying to Boswell, "He praised me at a time when praise was of value to me." On another occasion, when asked whether he considered Warburton a superior critic to Theobald, he replied. "He 'd make two-and-fifty Theobalds, cut into slices!" Johnson's sketch of him, in the *Life of Pope*, Boswell calls "the tribute due to him when he was no longer in 'high place,' but numbered with the dead."

14 28-31. He employed six amanuenses, not a large number of assistants for a task of such magnitude. Nor was the sum of fifteen hundred guineas a generous one from which to pay these assistants.

14 33. **Chesterfield.** Every young man should read an abridged edition of Chesterfield's *Letters to his Son*; for example, the volume in the Knickerbocker Nugget Series. It contains much that is worth remembering, and the style is entertaining.

15 17. It is hard to realize what a stupendous task Johnson undertook when he began his Dictionary. Other dictionaries, notably Bailey's, were in existence, but they were mere beginnings of what he had in mind. As lists of words, with explanations of the meanings, they were useful, but none of them could reasonably be considered a standard. A standard Johnson's certainly was. Although no etymologist, in general he not only gave full and clear definitions, but he chose remarkably happy illustrations of the meanings of words. By taking care, also, to select passages which were interesting and profitable reading as well as elegant English, he succeeded in making probably the most readable dictionary that has ever appeared.

15 23. For the *Vanity of Human Wishes*, see Hales's *Longer English Poems* or Syle's *From Milton to Tennyson*. As in the case of *London*, the student will wish to compare Dryden's translation.

16 8–9. And this was eleven years after the *London* had appeared; as Boswell says, his fame was already established.

16 13. **Goodman's Fields.** Garrick made this theater successful.

16 15. **Drury Lane Theatre.** Near Drury Lane. (See note to **8** 34.) Other prominent actors in this famous old theatre were Kean, the Kembles, and Mrs. Siddons.

17 13. See page 7. The story on which *Irene* is based is as follows: —

Mahomet the Great, first emperor of the Turks, in the year 1453 laid siege to the city of Constantinople, then possessed by the Greeks, and, after an obstinate resistance, took and sacked it. Among the many young women whom the commanders thought fit to lay hands on and present to him was one named Irene, a Greek, of incomparable beauty and such rare perfection of body and mind, that the emperor, becoming enamored of her, neglected the care of his government and empire for two whole years, and thereby so exasperated the Janizaries, that they mutinied and threatened to dethrone him. To prevent this mischief, Mustapha Bassa, a person of great credit with him, undertook to represent to him the great danger to which he lay exposed by the indulgence of his passion: he called to his remembrance the character, actions, and achievements of his predecessors, and the state of his government; and, in short, so roused him from his lethargy, that he took a horrible resolution to silence the clamors of his people by the sacrifice of this admirable creature. Accordingly, he commanded her to be dressed and adorned in the richest manner that she and her attendants could devise, and against a certain hour issued orders for the nobility and leaders of his army to attend him in the great hall of his palace. When they were all assembled, himself appeared with great pomp and magnificence, leading his captive by the hand, unconscious of guilt and ignorant of his design. With a furious and menacing look, he gave the beholders to understand that he meant to remove the cause of their discontent; but bade them first view that lady, whom he held with his left hand, and say whether any of them, possessed of a jewel so rare and precious, would for any cause forego her; to which they answered that he had great reason for his affection toward her. To this the emperor replied that he would convince them that he was yet master of himself. And having so said, presently, with one of his hands catching the fair Greek by the hair of the head, and drawing his falchion with the other, he, at one blow, struck off her head, to the great terror of them all: and having so done, he said unto them, "Now by this judge whether your emperor is able to bridle his affections or not." — Hawkins's *Life of Johnson*.

17 20–21. **Tatler, Spectator.** It is to be hoped that the reader needs no introduction to these papers or to the account of them in Macaulay's essay on Addison.

17 30. Rambler. A suitable title for a series of moral discourses? At the time of the undertaking he composed a prayer to the effect that he might in this way promote the glory of Almighty God and the salvation both of himself and others. — *Prayers and Meditations*, p. 9, quoted by Boswell.

17 31–32. Boswell considers it a strong confirmation of the truth of Johnson's remark that "a man may write at any time if he will set himself doggedly to it," that "notwithstanding his constitutional indolence, his depression of spirits, and his labour in carrying on his Dictionary, he answered the stated calls of the press twice a week from the stores of his mind during all that time."

17 34. Richardson. Samuel Richardson. When he was a boy, the girls employed him to write love letters for them; and his novels, written in after life, also took the form of letters. He wrote *Pamela, or Virtue Rewarded; Clarissa Harlowe, or the History of a Young Lady;* and *The History of Sir Charles Grandison* (about 1750). Johnson called him "an author who has enlarged the knowledge of human nature and taught the passions to move at the command of virtue."

18 2. Young. Johnson held a high opinion of Edward Young's most famous work, *Night Thoughts*, and Boswell writes, "No book whatever can be recommended to young persons, with better hopes of seasoning their minds with *vital religion*, than Young's *Night Thoughts*." — **Hartley.** David Hartley, prominent as a psychologist, and as a physician benevolent and studious. For intimate friends he chose such men as Warburton and Young.

18 3. Dodington. A member of Parliament who patronized men of letters and was complimented by Young and Fielding.

18 7. Frederic. When Frederick, Prince of Wales, became the center of the opposition to Walpole, in 1737, among the leaders of his political friends, called "the Leicester House Party," — at that time Leicester House was the residence of the Prince of Wales, — were Chesterfield, William Pitt, and Bubb Dodington.

18 25. In regard to the use of antiquated and hard words, for which Johnson was censured, he says in *Idler* No. 90, "He that thinks with more extent than another, will want words of larger meaning."

18 30–32. brilliancy . . . eloquence . . . humour. Johnson wrote many of these discourses so hastily, says Boswell, that he did not even read them over before they were printed. Boswell continues: "Sir Joshua Reynolds once asked him by what means he had attained his extraordinary accuracy and flow of language. He told him, that he had early laid it down as a fixed rule to do his best on every occasion, and

in every company: to impart whatever he knew in the most forcible language he could put it in; and that by constant practice, and never suffering any careless expressions to escape him, or attempting to deliver his thoughts without arranging them in the clearest manner, it became habitual to him." One man who knew Johnson intimately observed "that he always talked as if he was talking upon oath."

18 32–19 10. Cf. Johnson's comment: "Whoever wishes to attain an English style, familiar but not coarse, and elegant but not ostentatious, must give his days and nights to the volumes of Addison."—Boswell, 1750.

19 1–2. **Sir Roger,** etc. These two sets of allusions offer a good excuse for handling complete editions of the *Spectator* and the *Rambler*.

19 21. **the Gunnings.** "The beautiful Misses Gunning," two sisters, were born in Ireland. They went to London in 1751, were continually followed by crowds, and were called "the handsomest women alive."—**Lady Mary.** Lady Mary Wortley Montagu. Let one of the encyclopædias introduce you to this relative of Fielding who laughed at Pope when he made love to her, and whose wit had full play in the brilliant letters from Constantinople which added greatly to her reputation as an independent thinker.

19 23–24. **the Monthly Review.** This Whig periodical would not appeal to Johnson as did its rival, the *Critical Review*. It was the *Monthly* that Goldsmith did hack work for. Smollett wrote for the other. See Irving's *Life of Goldsmith*, Chapter VII.

19 31. It was published in 1755, price £4 10*s*., bound.

20 17. The letter, which needs no comment, is as follows:

February 7, 1755.

To the Right Honourable the Earl of Chesterfield.

My Lord,

I have been lately informed, by the proprietor of the World, that two papers, in which my Dictionary is recommended to the publick, were written by your Lordship. To be so distinguished, is an honour, which, being very little accustomed to favours from the great, I know not well how to receive, or in what terms to acknowledge.

When, upon some slight encouragement, I first visited your Lordship, I was overpowered, like the rest of mankind, by the enchantment of your address; and could not forbear to wish that I might boast myself *Le vainqueur du vainqueur de la terre*; — that I might obtain that regard for which I saw the world contending; but I found my attendance so little encouraged that neither pride nor modesty would suffer me to continue it. When I had once addressed your Lordship in publick, I had exhausted all the art of pleasing which a retired and uncourtly scholar can possess. I have done all that I could; and no man is well pleased to have his all neglected, be it ever so little.

Seven years, my Lord, have now past, since I waited in your outward rooms or was repulsed from your door; during which time I have been pushing on my work through difficulties, of which it is useless to complain, and have brought it, at last, to the verge of publication, without one act of assistance, one word of encouragement, or one smile of favour. Such treatment I did not expect, for I never had a Patron before.

The shepherd in Virgil grew at last acquainted with Love, and found him a native of the rocks.

Is not a Patron, my Lord, one who looks with unconcern on a man struggling for life in the water, and, when he has reached ground, encumbers him with help? The notice which you have been pleased to take of my labours, had it been early, had been kind; but it has been delayed till I am indifferent, and cannot enjoy it; till I am solitary, and cannot impart it; till I am known, and do not want it. I hope it is no very cynical asperity not to confess obligations where no benefit has been received, or to be unwilling that the Publick should consider me as owing that to a Patron, which Providence has enabled me to do for myself.

Having carried on my work thus far with so little obligation to any favourer of learning, I shall not be disappointed though I should conclude it, if less be possible, with less; for I have been long wakened from that dream of hope, in which I once boasted myself with so much exultation,

My Lord,
Your Lordship's most humble,
Most obedient servant,
SAM. JOHNSON.

20 24. **Horne Tooke.** A name assumed by John Horne, a politician and philologist whose career is briefly outlined in *The Century Dictionary*. The passage which so moved him follows.

In this work, when it shall be found that much is omitted, let it not be forgotten that much likewise is performed; and though no book was ever spared out of tenderness to the authour, and the world is little solicitous to know whence proceeded the faults of that which it condemns; yet it may gratify curiosity to inform it that the *English Dictionary* was written with little assistance of the learned, and without any patronage of the great; not in the soft obscurities of retirement, or under the shelter of academick bowers, but amidst inconvenience and distraction, in sickness and in sorrow. It may repress the triumph of malignant criticism to observe, that if our language is not here fully displayed, I have only failed in an attempt which no human powers have hitherto completed. If the lexicons of ancient tongues, now immutably fixed, and comprised in a few volumes, be yet, after the toil of successive ages, inadequate and delusive; if the aggregated knowledge, and co-operating diligence of the *Italian* academicians, did not secure them from the censure of *Beni*; if the embodied criticks of *France*, when fifty years had been spent upon their work, were obliged to change its oeconomy, and give their second edition another form, I may surely be contented

without the praise of perfection, which, if I could obtain, in this gloom of solitude, what would it avail me? I have protracted my work till most of those whom I wished to please have sunk into the grave, and success and miscarriage are empty sounds: I therefore dismiss it with frigid tranquillity, having little to fear or hope from censure or from praise.

This extract is taken from the fourth edition, London, MDCCLXXIII, the last to receive Johnson's corrections. If you possibly can get the opportunity, turn these volumes over enough to find a few of the whimsical definitions, such, for example, as that of lexicographer, according to Johnson "a writer of dictionaries, a *harmless drudge*." Other words worth looking up are *excise*, *oats*, and *networks*.

21 6. **Junius and Skinner.** Johnson frankly admitted that for etymologies he turned to the shelf which contained the etymological dictionaries of these seventeenth-century students of the Teutonic languages. This phase of dictionary making was not considered so deeply then as it is now.

21 13. **spunging-houses.** Johnson's *Dictionary* says: "Spunging-house. A house to which debtors are taken before commitment to prison, where the bailiffs sponge upon them, or riot at their cost."

21 26. **Jenyns.** This writer, who, according to Boswell, "could very happily play with a light subject," ventured so far beyond his depth that it was easy for Johnson to expose him.

22 10. **Rasselas.** Had Johnson written nothing else, says Boswell, *Rasselas* "would have rendered his name immortal in the world of literature. . . . It has been translated into most, if not all, of the modern languages."

22 12. **Miss Lydia Languish.** Of course plays are not necessarily written to be read, but Sheridan's well-known comedy, *The Rivals*, is decidedly readable. Every one should be familiar with Miss Languish and Mrs. Malaprop.

23 8. **Bruce.** The *Dictionary of National Biography* says that James Bruce — whose *Travels to Discover the Sources of the Nile*, five volumes, appeared in 1790 — "will always remain the poet, and his work the epic, of African travel."

23 13. **Mrs. Lennox.** A woman whose literary efforts Johnson encouraged so much as he did Mrs. Lennox's is certainly worth looking up in the index to Boswell's *Johnson*. — **Mrs. Sheridan,** the dramatist's mother, gave Johnson many an entertaining evening in her home. She and her son entered heartily into the lively, stimulating conversations he loved.

23 25. **Hector . . . Aristotle.** The sacking of Troy is generally assigned to the twelfth century B.C. Aristotle lived eight centuries later. — **Julio Romano.** An Italian painter of the fifteenth century.

24 5. **the Lord Privy Seal.** Some documents require only the privy seal; others must have the great seal too. For Johnson's admission that the printer was wise in striking out the reference alluded to, see the index to Boswell's *Johnson*, under *Gower*.

24 14. **Oxford.** By recalling what Macaulay said in the early part of the essay (**10** 26, 27) about Oxford, and by bearing in mind what House [of Stuart? of Hanover?] George the Third belonged to, one sees point to "was becoming loyal."

24 14–18. Study these four short sentences in connection with the preceding sentence beginning "George the Third." To what extent are they a repetition? To what extent an explanation?

24 22. **accepted.** When, in answer to Johnson's question to Lord Bute, "Pray, my Lord, what am I expected to do for this pension?" he received the ready reply, "It is not given you for anything you are to do, but for what you have done," he hesitated no longer.

Three hundred a year was a large sum in Johnson's eyes at that time. Whether he wrote less than he would have written without it may be questioned, says Mr. Hill, but he adds that probably "without the pension he would not have lived to write the second greatest of his works — the *Lives of the Poets*."

25 19. **a ghost . . . Cock Lane.** If you will read Boswell's account of the affair, you will probably conclude that Johnson was not quite so "weak" as Macaulay implies.

25 26. **Churchill.** One of the reigning wits of the day, Boswell says.

26 3. **The preface.** Other critics speak with more enthusiasm of the good sense and the clear expression of the preface, and find that these qualities are not altogether lacking in the notes.

26 8. **Wilhelm Meister.** The hero of Goethe's novel of the same name. You may have read this passage on *Hamlet* in Rolfe's edition (p. 14), quoted from Furness's *Hamlet*, Vol. II, pp. 272 ff. Sprague also quotes it in his edition, p. 13.

26 26. **Ben.** The eighteenth-century Johnson has been followed by the nineteenth-century critics in putting a high estimate on the Jonson who wrote *Every Man in His Humor*. We are told that Shakspere took one of the parts in this play, acted in 1598. If you are not satisfied with the account in *The Century Dictionary*, or with any encyclopædia article, see *The English Poets*, edited by T. H. Ward, Vol. II (The Macmillan Company).

26 33–34. **Æschylus, Euripides, Sophocles.** Three great contemporary Greek tragedians.

27 3. **Fletcher.** Point out why an editor of Shakspere's plays should be familiar with the work of this group of Elizabethan dramatists.

27 11. **Royal Academy.** "His Majesty having the preceding year [1768] instituted the Royal Academy of Arts in London, Johnson had won the honour of being appointed Professor in Ancient Literature." — Boswell. Goldsmith was Professor in Ancient History in the same institution, and Boswell was Secretary for Foreign Correspondence. Look in *The Century Dictionary* under *academy*, the third meaning, and recall whatever you may have heard or read about the French Academy.

27 12. **the King.** "His Majesty expressed a desire to have the literary biography of this country ably executed, and proposed to Dr. Johnson to undertake it." — Boswell. Read Boswell's account of the interview. In consulting the index look under *George III.*

27 22. **colloquial talents.** Madame d'Arblay once said that Johnson had about him more "fun, and comical humour, and love of nonsense" than almost anybody else she ever saw.

28 23. **Goldsmith.** Macaulay's article on Goldsmith in *The Encyclopædia Britannica* is short, and so thoroughly readable that there is no excuse for not being familiar with it. Boswell is continually giving interesting glimpses of Dr. Oliver Goldsmith, and by taking advantage of the index in the *Life of Johnson* one may in half an hour learn a great deal about this remarkable man. According to Boswell, "he had sagacity enough to cultivate assiduously the acquaintance of Johnson, and his faculties were gradually enlarged by the contemplation of such a model."

28 24. **Reynolds.** We can learn from short articles about Sir Joshua's career, but the index to Boswell's *Johnson* will introduce us to the good times the great portrait painter had with the great conversationalist whom we are studying. Reynolds was the first proposer of the Club, and "there seems to have been hardly a day," says Robina Napier, "when these friends did not meet in the painting room or in general society." Ruskin says, "Titian paints nobler pictures and Vandyke had nobler subjects, but neither of them entered so subtly as Sir Joshua did into the minor varieties of human heart and temper." The business of his art "was not to criticise, but to observe," and for this purpose the hours he spent at the Club might be as profitable as those spent in his painting room. It will be interesting to make a list of some of the most notable "subjects" Reynolds painted. — **Burke.** Be sure to read Boswell's account of the famous Round Robin. It will

make you feel better acquainted with Burke, Johnson, Reynolds, and Goldsmith. The student will find valuable material in Professor Lamont's edition of Burke's *Speech on Conciliation with America*, published by Ginn & Company.

28 25. **Gibbon.** You noticed on the *Round Robin* the autograph of the author of *The History of the Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire?*

28 26. **Jones.** Sir William Henry Rich Jones was "the first English scholar to master Sanskrit, and to recognize its importance for comparative philology," says *The Century Dictionary*.

29 9. **Johnson's Club.** The Club still flourishes. Both Scott and Macaulay belonged to it.

29 14. **James Boswell.** "Out of the fifteen millions that then lived, and had bed and board, in the British Islands, this man has provided us a greater *pleasure* than any other individual, at whose cost we now enjoy ourselves; perhaps has done us a greater *service* than can be specially attributed to more than two or three: yet, ungrateful that we are, no written or spoken eulogy of James Boswell anywhere exists; his recompense in solid pudding (so far as copyright went) was not excessive; and as for the empty praise, it has altogether been denied him. Men are unwiser than children; they do not know the hand that feeds."

So Carlyle writes of the man; the book, he says, is "beyond any other product of the eighteenth century"; it draws aside the curtains of the Past and gives us a picture which changeful Time cannot harm or hide. The picture charms generation after generation because it is true. "It is not speaking with exaggeration, but with strict measured sobriety, to say that this Book of Boswell's will give us more real insight into the *History of England* during those days than twenty other Books, falsely entitled 'Histories,' which take to themselves that special aim. . . . The thing I want to see is not Redbook Lists, and Court Calendars, and Parliamentary Registers, but the LIFE OF MAN in England: what men did, thought, suffered, enjoyed; the form, especially the spirit, of their terrestrial existence, its outward environment, its inward principle; *how* and *what* it was; whence it proceeded, whither it was tending. . . .

"Hence, indeed, comes it that History, which should be 'the essence of innumerable Biographies,' will tell us, question it as we like, less than one genuine Biography may do, pleasantly and of its own accord!"

Mr. Leslie Stephen says that "Macaulay's graphic description of his absurdities, and Carlyle's more penetrating appreciation of his higher

qualities, contain all that can be said"; but the more recent testimony of Dr. George B. Hill, in *Dr. Johnson, His Friends and His Critics*, should count for something. Dr. Hill points out that while Macaulay grants Boswell immortality he refuses him greatness, and calls attention to what he considers elements of greatness. In regard to the accuracy of a biographer who would "run half over London, in order to fix a date correctly," he says: "That love, I might almost say that passion for accuracy, that distinguished Boswell in so high a degree does not belong to a mind that is either mean or feeble. Mean minds are indifferent to truth, and feeble minds can see no importance in a date."

29 27. **Wilkes.** John Wilkes, a notorious politician, was imprisoned for writing an article in which he attacked George the Third. The liberty of the press was involved and Wilkes was released, much to the delight of the people. For a brief summary of the Bill of Rights, see Brewer's *Historic Note-book* or *A Handbook of English Political History*, by Acland and Ransome.

29 29. **Whitfield.** Macaulay's short sentence implies, does it not, that Whitfield (or Whitefield) was a noisy, open-air preacher among the Calvinistic Methodists? In testing the accuracy of this inference in *The Encyclopædia Britannica* or in Franklin's *Autobiography*, note in what countries Whitefield preached, and where he died. Boswell quotes Johnson's opinion of Whitefield in two places.

29 30. **In a happy hour.** May 16, 1763. By all means read Boswell's account of the rough reception he received and the persistence necessary to secure the fastening.

31 14. **pity . . . esteem.** The Thrales were not alone in overlooking these oddities. "His tricks and contortions, a subject for pity not ridicule," says Mr. Hoste, "were ignored by the celebrated wits and beauties who visited him in his gloomy 'den,' and by the duchesses and other distinguished ladies who gathered 'four and five deep' around him at fashionable assemblies, hanging on his sentences, and contended for the nearest places to his chair."

31 15. **Southwark.** South of the commercial center of London and across the Thames.

31 16. **Streatham.** About five miles southwest of London City. The Southwark apartment was in a commercial district; the Streatham apartment in a thinly settled residential suburb.

31 34. **Maccaroni.** See *The Century Dictionary* or Brewer's *Handbook of Phrase and Fable*.

32 21. **Levett.** Of Levett, Goldsmith said to Boswell, "He is poor and honest, which is recommendation enough to Johnson."

32 30. **the Mitre Tavern.** "The Mitre Tavern still stands in Fleet Street: but where now is its Scot-and-lot paying, beef-and-ale loving, cock-hatted, potbellied Landlord; its rosy-faced, assiduous Landlady, with all her shining brass-pans, waxed tables, well-filled larder-shelves; her cooks, and bootjacks, and errand-boys, and watery-mouthed hangers-on? Gone! Gone! The becking waiter, that with wreathed smiles was wont to spread for Samuel and Bozzy their 'supper of the gods,' has long since pocketed his last sixpence; and vanished, sixpences and all, like a ghost at cockcrowing." Yet, Carlyle goes on to say, thanks to this book of Boswell's, "they who are gone are still here; though hidden they are revealed, though dead they yet speak."

33 27. **Hebrides.** Locate these picturesque islands on the map.

34 10. **Lord Mansfield.** William Murray, chief justice of the King's Bench from 1756 to 1788, has been called "the founder of English commercial law."

34 23. **Macpherson.** In 1760 James Macpherson published what purported to be fragments of Gaelic verse with translations. These were so interesting that he was sent to the Highlands to hunt for more, and within three years he published the *Poems of Ossian*, consisting of two epics, "Fingal" and "Temora." Their genuineness has been discussed ever since. Evidently Johnson settled the matter to his own satisfaction and to Macaulay's, and you may be interested in what Boswell has to say. At the same time it seems clear that Johnson went too far in his charge of forgery. Macpherson probably did not find a complete epic, yet he undoubtedly found some Gaelic poetry.

34 27. **contemptuous terms.** Boswell gives the following letter:

MR. JAMES MACPHERSON,

I received your foolish and impudent letter. Any violence offered me I shall do my best to repel; and what I cannot do for myself, the law shall do for me. I hope I shall not be deterred from detecting what I think a cheat, by the menaces of a ruffian.

What would you have me retract? I thought your book an imposture; I think it an imposture still. For this opinion I have given my reasons to the publick, which I here dare you to refute. Your rage I defy. Your abilities, since your Homer, are not so formidable; and what I hear of your morals, inclines me to pay regard not to what you shall say, but to what you shall prove. You may print this if you will.

SAM. JOHNSON.

35 11–12. **The Kenricks, Campbells, MacNicols, and Hendersons.** If Johnson and Macaulay do not tell enough about these men, Boswell does.

35 30. **Bentley.** Richard Bentley (1662–1742), a well-known English classical scholar and critic.

36 13. **Taxation no Tyranny.** The rest of the title is *An Answer to the Resolutions and Address of the American Congress.*

37 6. **Wilson.** Richard Wilson was one of the greatest English landscape painters, says *The Dictionary of National Biography.*

37 14. **Cowley.** The man who wrote

> God the first garden made, and the first city Cain.

37 18. **Restoration.** The *International Dictionary* offers a brief explanation in case you are not absolutely certain of the exact meaning.

37 23. **Walmesley.** See note to 5 32. — **Button's.** Button's coffee-house flourished earlier in the century. Do you remember any other reference to it? to Will's? to Child's? — **Cibber.** Colley Cibber, actor and dramatist, altered and adapted some of Shakspere's plays. Both Johnson and Boswell express their opinions of him frankly enough. He was appointed poet laureate in 1730.

37 25. **Orrery.** Orrery did more than enjoy this privilege, — he wrote a book entitled *Remarks on the Life and Writings of Jonathan Swift.* Boswell records Johnson's opinion of it. What other great literary men enjoyed the society of Swift? *The Century Dictionary* gives a column to Swift, and Johnson has a sketch in his *Lives of the Poets.*

37 26. **services of no very honourable kind.** By supplying Pope with private intelligence for his *Dunciad* he "gained the esteem of Pope and the enmity of his victims."

38 32. **Malone.** Edmund Malone was a friend of Johnson, Burke, and Reynolds. He wrote a supplement to Johnson's edition of Shakspere, published an edition of Reynolds's works, and after bringing out his own edition of Shakspere, left material for another edition, which was published by James Boswell the younger in 1821. Boswell's *Malone*, the "third variorum" edition, is generally considered the best. To Boswell the elder, an intimate friend, he was of much assistance in preparing the *Life of Johnson*, and he edited with valuable notes the third, fourth, fifth, and sixth reissues of the work.

40 21–22. **In a solemn and tender prayer.**

> Almighty God, Father of all mercy, help me by thy grace, that I may, with humble and sincere thankfulness, remember the comforts and conveniences which I have enjoyed at this place; and that I may resign them with holy submission, equally trusting in thy protection when thou givest, and when thou takest away. Have mercy upon me, O Lord, have mercy upon me.

To thy fatherly protection, O Lord, I commend this family. Bless, guide and defend them, that they may so pass through this world, as finally to enjoy in thy presence everlasting happiness, for Jesus Christ's sake, Amen. — Boswell's *Johnson*.

41 1. **Italian fiddler.** A violinist of much talent. Piozzi was the music master from Brescia who, a little over three years after Mr. Thrale's death, married the widow. After learning what you can from Boswell, you will enjoy some such account as the *Encyclopædia Britannica* offers. While doing your reading it may be well to keep in mind what two or three critics have said. Mr. Mowbray Morris writes: "After all the abuse showered on the unfortunate woman it is pleasant to know that the marriage proved a happy one in every respect. Piozzi, who was really a well-mannered, amiable man, took every care of his wife's fortune, and on their return to England her family and friends were soon reconciled to him." Mr. Leslie Stephen says: "Her love of Piozzi, which was both warm and permanent, is the most amiable feature of her character." Mr. Herbert Paul, after praising Macaulay's *Life of Johnson*, adds, "Yet, if I may say so, I can never forgive Macaulay for his cruel and unaccountable injustice to Mrs. Thrale."

41 3. **the Ephesian matron.** She cared so much for her husband that she went into the vault to die with him, and there, in the midst of her violent grief, fell in love with a soldier who was guarding some dead bodies near by. For the story (told by a Latin writer, Petronius), see Jeremy Taylor's *The Rule and Exercises of Holy Dying*, Chapter V, section 8. — **the two pictures.** In Act III.

42 2. **Burke parted from him.** After twenty-seven years of uninterrupted friendship with Johnson, says Robina Napier. — **Windham.** The Right Hon. William Windham, a member of the Club, a friend of Malone, Burke, Fox, and Pitt; in 1794 Secretary at War (Pitt's ministry), in 1806 War and Colonial Secretary (Lord Grenville's ministry); in the words of Macaulay, "the first gentleman of his age, the ingenious, the chivalrous, the high-souled Windham." Johnson wrote him appreciative letters in August and October, 1784. See Boswell.

42 4. **Frances Burney.** In Macaulay's essay on Madame d'Arblay, he says: "Her appearance is an important epoch in our literary history. Evelina was the first tale written by a woman, and purporting to be a picture of life and manners, that lived or deserved to live." Read this account of the "timid and obscure girl" who suddenly "found herself on the highest pinnacle of fame," eulogized by such men as Burke, Windham, Gibbon, Reynolds, and Sheridan.

42 6. **Langton.** See page 30.

42 10–11. **his temper.** In connection with this closing sentence let us remember a paragraph from Boswell (1776):

"That he was occasionally remarkable for violence of temper may be granted: but let us ascertain the degree, and not let it be supposed that he was in a perpetual rage, and never without a club in his hand to knock down every one who approached him. On the contrary, the truth is, that by much the greatest part of his time he was civil, obliging, nay, polite in the true sense of the word; so much so, that many gentlemen who were long acquainted with him never received, or even heard a strong expression from him."

Doctor Johnson's
Dictionary

Popish Plot.

The French people
I know

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